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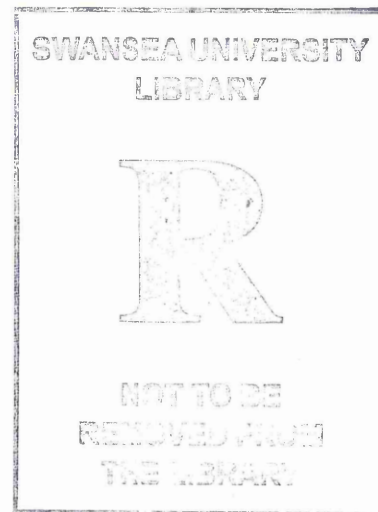
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Inward Looking: The impact of migration on 'Romanipe' from the Romani perspective

by

Aleksandar G. Marinov



Submitted to Swansea University in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Swansea University

2015

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Abstract

The Roma are those Europeans who in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been treated negatively by harsh laws, execution and transportation in several European countries (Mayall, 1988). At present, Roma are an integral part of Europe, however, facing structural and social inequalities, different forms of exclusion and discrimination. EU Roma form a large segment of those EU citizens who exercise their rights to freely travel, reside and work in other EU states. Some may argue, however, that the reception to EU Roma migrants has not been dissimilar to that experienced by the non-EU migrants and asylum seekers.

A great part of the research on Roma/ Romani migrations focuses on political, economic and historical accounts. This study, instead, tries to give an alternative reading on Romani migrations in three main ways. Firstly, it studies Bulgarian Roma and with this complements the better understanding of the Roma of Europe. Secondly, it gives a greater emphasis on the cultural and social implications of their migrations. And thirdly, it gives an insider perspective.

This work seeks to understand better the relationship between Romani identity, performance and migration. Particularly, it studies the idea of 'Romanipe' under the prism of the personal accounts of Romani migrants. It also seeks to understand the relationships between the Romani groups in Europe, due to their increased travel and convergence, and predict the effects of migration on (new) Romani consciousness. It is particularly interested in processes, transformation, potentialities and change. This research is based on qualitative data gathered from Romani migrants from three towns of Bulgaria. It concludes with a discussion on the Romani identity, 'Romanipe,' feelings of belonging and Romani (trans) nationalism.

Declaration and Statements

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed:(candidate)

Date: 29th September 2015

Statement 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction service has been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

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This work is dedicated to my father.

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(НАЦИОНАЛЕН СТАТИСТИЧЕСКИ ИНСТИТУТ, 2011)

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Definitions

Ciganin – a male Roma; Ciganka – a female Roma

Roma - despite the existence of other names and preferences of groups to use other self-appellations such as Gypsies, Sinti, Cigani, Ashkali, Egyptians, and many others, this paper uses the term Roma and Romanies interchangeably. All references to Roma and Romanies in this text should be understood to be in full compliance with the terms used by the respective institutions, such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the EU. It also refers to these people who speak a form of Romanes (see below) and could trace their heritage to the Indian sub-continent

Rom – a male Roma; Romka – a female Roma

Romanes – the Romani language

Romani – that which pertains to the Roma; could be used as an adjective

Gadjo – a non-Roma

Informant/ Interlocutor/ Interviewee/ Participant/Respondent – these terms have been used interchangeably in this work. These words refer to those Bulgarian Roma who were interviewed for this study

Chapter 1 Introduction

“Parties and celebrations in England [far from the Romani community] are a means to unclog (unplug), to get rid of the negative energy; while here in Bulgaria, in a Romani gathering, your heart [...] is filled; your soul becomes one with the soul of the others. There is a circle of a love [...] and re-filling with love [which is being passed around] to the other. It is being filled by the love of the [the one next to you]; that makes one common circle; that is the good thing about the Gypsy gatherings – there is so much sharing of love, everything is very pure and genuine, and people celebrate with their hearts.”(Informant 5, male, Sofia, late 30s)

1.1. Preface and positionality

The above quote epitomises the way I feel each time I am surrounded by my close and extended family. This sentiment perfectly encapsulates the reasons why I am always eager to be in their company. As a Romani migrant myself, I too have felt the differences between ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ echoed in the above quote. My own experiences have made me passionate about the discussion of Romani migration from the Romani perspective and the consequences of it.

If there must be a beginning, then I should say this thesis I owe to my father – the person who sent me abroad for the first time – against my will (because that is ‘the way’ in our family). The year was November 2001 –as soon as I graduated from my English Language School in Sofia, the place I was born and raised. At the time of my departure, there were tears and heavy sentimental feelings consumed both my family and I despite the fact that only a short two-hour flight separated Sofia from Bremen, Germany. Since these very early experiences in a foreign country, however, I have been ever thankful to my father for having the foresight that he did.

Since my early experiences living abroad, I have and continue to encounter different peoples, cultures and ideas. I always have the sense that with each new encounter I receive a new ‘taste of life’. With each interaction in these foreign spaces it feels like I discover and re-discover different aspects of my own identity that have resulted in countless changes and personal transformations – both profound and trivial.

There has been a constant in my identity, however, which has been acting as a corner stone, unable to be shifted– my Romani identity. My original ideas about the Roma have been centred entirely on those of my immediate and extended family. I have been raised and nurtured as one who is a Roma and one who should never to be shy to openly identify as a Roma because one should not deny or hide who they are. This could be seen as a tool to counteract the generally negative perceptions about ‘the Cigani’ along with their prevailing stereotypes that can easily make Romani children (who study in mixed schools) unwilling to reveal their Romani heritage. The strategy which my family has successfully employed in order to prevent such a scenario has been simple – ‘prove to your peers that you are not that different as a Roma and that you can excel.’

As a result since my early years as a child, this idea as a Roma who is not different and even better than the rest, has prevailed in my identity. No matter where I went and who I came across with, thus, it came natural to me to say I am a Roma who is not different than the persons I encountered throughout my years. That probably explains why the Romani theme has been prevalent throughout my studies. I have been curious to learn what policies and institutions do about the Roma, what has been done and what can be done so that there are fewer discrepancies between the Roma and the societies they occupy. Probably unsurprisingly, throughout my academic years I would eagerly take on academic assignments that examined Romani topics. My decision was mainly driven by my sense of obligation to myself as a Roma and the people I personally know as Roma. Through my research and writing I felt I was not only learning but also developing abilities to raise awareness about the community that I felt the closest connection to.

This work was inspired by my personal experiences, as I like to say that I am a product of migration myself. Over the years, with each journey back to Sofia in order to re-unite with my family and re-kindle my (Romani) spirit, not only do I feel that I re-discover my old place, thus looking at it with a different set of eyes, but also family and friends saw a ‘different person’ to the one they used to know from the previous return journey. That is really how the idea of this project naturally came to life with its cultural and social emphasis.

1.2. Migration is the 'heart', transformation is the 'part'

Migration can be necessary and vital for the survival of both animals and humans. Journeys thus can be long, risky, and perilous, however, essential. There are many examples of animals of different kingdoms whose lives and survival depend on the change of the seasons and their abilities to travel. Thus, they would travel on land, water or air in great lengths in order to reach more suitable climates and environments in their search to mate (or lay eggs) food and water. Gray whales, for example, are known to have the longest migration among mammals as they cover between 16,000 km and 20,000 km annually between their winter mating grounds in the warm waters of Mexico in the winter and their feeding grounds in the Arctic seas in the summers (Annenberg Learner, 2015).

Besides being long, migratory journeys can be also dangerous. In the African Great Migration for example, over a million wildebeest, zebras and other grazing animals cover between 800 and 1,600 km together in their search for water and grazing lands in the dry season in eastern Africa. Even though some of them, such as the zebras, live in tightly knit family units, they have learned there are benefits in them coming and travelling as part of a bigger unit as they pursue common goals (to reach lands with water and food) and fear common enemies (predators such as lions, leopards, cheetahs or hyenas) (Stephens, n.d.).

In this case, one may agree with Hans Christian Andersen who wrote in his autobiography 'The Fairy Tale of my Life' (2000):

"To move, to breathe, to fly, to float,
To gain all while you give,
To roam the roads of lands remote,
To travel is to live."

As we see, traveling may be needed and natural but settling down is also an integral part of the process. The search for a 'home,' for example, may give a true meaning and purpose of the migratory choices to humans, just as animals may traverse the globe for thousands of kilometres in order to find mates or to give birth. Both migrating and settling down work hand in hand and enhance each other and as such one should not be seen as an antithesis of the other. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari

(1987) explain space as being both 'smooth' and 'striated.' This analogy could be compared to the distinction between moving migrants (or nomads) and the sedentary. According to the authors, the smooth and the striated spaces are fundamentally different in nature, however, they are in a constant state of communication: they enhance each other, give birth to one another and are inherently mixed. Similarly, there is a mutual interplay between migration and settling down, or the search to find 'home,' where both influence each other in intricate ways.

Migration, besides necessary and vital can be unavoidably *transformational*. George Zipf sees each person as "a unit" which is the result of a "set of paths" they take (Zipf, 1949, cited in Adey, 2010). Thus, a person is to be considered as the unique combination of their decisions, choices, or their 'paths.' This becomes even further complemented when these 'paths' change, evolve and are involved in movement themselves (Adey, 2010). Writing in relation to Zipf's point, Lyotard has conveyed that individuals cannot and should not be seen as isolated and self-sufficient selves but a result of relations which are mobile and floating (Lyotard, 1984 cited in Adey, 2010).

Perhaps we should ask ourselves the question how the different "paths" taken by migrants impact, influence, and shape their individual and social, group identities, rather than looking at the factor of migration as a process. This work is concerned not only by portraying the essential necessity of people to migrate in order to "live" (as Hans Christian Anderson has put it) but also the consequences and impacts on their journeys – which could lead to furtherer *discoveries* or *beginnings*.

1.3. Contemporary debate on migration

The issue of migration of people has been historically significant and even though not unique to today's age, it has hardly been more momentous; it has dominated the public discourse of national and international figures and citizens alike, influencing policies and politics while figuring in headlines of mass media internationally. There is a link therefore between incessant migration of people, so vital, natural and necessary or a means to 'life,' and the forms of *transformation* because of their travels. The types of metamorphosis or shifts can be observed in the public

consciousness about refugees and asylum seekers, creation or breaking down of policies, new forms of governance and dynamics between states.

Today, there are more people on the move than at any other time in the human history. In 2011, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs reported that three per cent of the world population, around 214 million people, live outside their countries of origin (UN, 2011). In 2013 that number has increased to 3.2 per cent, around 232 million people (UNFPA-United Nations Population Fund, n.d.), while there is good reason to believe that this number has been increasing steadily especially with the failure to secure a safe place for the citizens of conflict zones. Such instabilities have been causing migrants to flee their home places and move internationally or within the boundaries of their states. Examples can be seen across the globe with thousands of migrants who try to reach USA from South and Central America and Mexico while there has been record high number of attempts to reach Europe via the Mediterranean (Adams, 2015). While the highest number of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean has been recorded at 214,000 for 2014, this number has been already been surpassed in late August 2015 – about 300,000 migrants (UN News Service Section, 2015). This unprecedented situation has been also highlighted by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad during the late summit in Geneva in 14 September 2015 who “implore[d] decision-makers in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific – as well as Europe – to take swift actions to establish effective and principled migration governance” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015a).

Europe or (wealthier) countries of the European Union (EU) are the desired destinations to thousands of migrants – refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants alike. This increased influx of people has put unprecedented challenges to nation-states and their leaders to think of ways to grapple with this reality which in turn put the EU as a formation yet to another test. In the last decade, there has been a rise of nationalistic sentiments across EU Member States, instances of Human Rights violations and failure of coordination of EU legislature and recommendations (Almeida, 2010; Rosato, 2011; Williams, 2004). The urge of new policies towards migration and migrants was recently sparked by the photo of three year-old Aylan

Kurdi washed ashore a beach in Turkey's town Bodrum in early September 2015. The spread of similar disturbing images have sparked international outcry, protests and pressure for other policies and consciousness about migrants and migration to be created.

An example of a form of 'transformation' was witnessed recently with the decision of Germany to terminate (temporarily) the Schengen Agreement and impose controls on its border with Austria. This was a result of the inability of the German state to cope with the unexpected number of migrants (BBC News, 2015) as hundreds of thousands arrived in the Bavarian capital Munich. Not only may Member States opt to terminate policy agreements (such as the Schengen Agreement) but also they may disagree on how or what would be the appropriate way to cope with that unexpected and continuing influx of migrants¹ and yet there is no guarantee that things will not change with time.

So far, migration has been presented largely through the lenses of political and economic implications to societies. Reviews find international migration as desirable and healthy to the labour market economy and the societies that receive immigrants (Ruhs and Vargas-Silva, 2015; Vargas-Silva, 2015). This whole discussion, however, seems to lack a debate on the participants of migration – those agents of migration who do the evaluation and credit the effects, or *transformations*, due to their travels.

1.4. Project's focus

The struggles and stories we come across today of the refugees and asylum seekers, largely through the use of media, are touching and heart-breaking indeed. But what about those Europeans who experience forms of exclusion, discrimination, stereotypes and plight similar to third world nationals? The Roma, are those 'unwanted' Europeans who have been on the receiving end of targeted policies of exclusion (in the past and at present) and inclusion and integration (at present), along

¹ While Germany believes a quota must be introduced in order for Member States to share the burden of accommodating migrants, current British government has been largely of the opinion that funds should be invested to provide education, training, and building of camps in the neighbouring countries; thus trying to deter them from trying to reach Europe.

with their prevailing stereotypes and forms of discrimination, exploitation, deportation, slavery and Holocaust (Clements, 2007; Hancock, 2002). Besides the previously mentioned concerns about the imminent issue of migration, on 11 September 2015 the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the UN, Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein expressed deep worries about the forced evictions of Roma in France, Bulgaria and several other European states. The expulsion of Roma in August 2015 in France is reported as the "simply latest" of a series of "collective forced evictions of Roma migrants [...] since 2012" while Europe has witness a number of similar examples in countries such as the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania and the United Kingdom (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015b).

Romani migrants deserve special consideration. On the one hand, discourse could be centred on the opposition to immigrants who arguably drive wages down, take jobs and benefits, bring crime and illegality. On the other hand it could be a discussion about predominant and deep rooted anti-Romani sentiments while Roma are not immigrants but full citizens and integral part of Europe's nation-states. The Roma are recognised as an "integral part of European civilization" and the "biggest ethnic minority in Europe" (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, n.d.) and yet, they have been historically perceived as 'other' and different – probably because of their essentially non-European origins and language, their secluded communities, their apparent physical and cultural characteristics as well as their images of being 'travellers' or 'nomads.'

The Roma of Europe today find themselves at large facing extreme forms of social exclusion, discrimination and aggression similar to those of refugees and immigrants from Africa and countries of the Middle East, and even those who are stateless (Fagan et al., 2006). As Collins et al. noted: "[...] Roma belong to 'first world' societies but live in pockets of poverty that have 'third world' characteristics." (Collins et al., 2006, p. 46). As a result, migration of Roma could be seen not only as a search for labour and an exercise of their right to freedom of movement (in the EU), but also a way to flee persecution, discrimination, marginalization and a search for a better life.

The first unconventional aspect of this work comes from the specific study of Bulgarian Roma. Thus far, Roma people have been perceived on the whole as a singular entity and in most of the cases referred to as 'the Roma people,' as one collective. In many publications the term 'Roma' curiously comes with an explanatory "footnote definition" (Council of Europe, 2012, p. 3). Notably, one can see a definition that shrinks and expands over time. In 1969 the Council of Europe (CoE) defined them as "Gypsies and other travellers", "Nomads" (1975 and 1983), "populations of nomadic origin" (1981), "Gypsies" (1993) and in 2012 the CoE gave the most recent definition of Roma. All this may be perceived as ironic because there is a great deal of confusion and vagueness in our understanding of who these people actually are. It should be born in mind that the Romanies are a diverse community that differs according to the place they occupy, the use of language, dialect use, traditions and self-appellations. Thus, to speak of the Roma as a singly homogeneous and unified unit would be wrong.

Also, since Bulgaria and Romania were among the most recent countries to join the EU in 2007, with that they brought a considerable number of Romanies. Romanian Roma are estimated to number around 673,626 (Index Mundi, n.d.a)² for 2014, while in Bulgaria they were about 280,979 according to the official census data in 2011 (Национален статистически институт, 2011) and around 304,687 according to estimates for 2014 (Index Mundi, n.d.b). Other authors, however, cite larger number of Roma for Romania – Rughiniş (2010) cited that between 730,00-970,000 and 1.5 million Roma could actually live in Romania. Also, by virtue of the fact that Bulgaria and Romania were the poorest regions in the EU, both countries would be put and figure together as part of more general discussions about potential 'migration threats' as their citizens would seek to migrate to the wealthier EU counties. For example, this was well the case with the advent of lifting of work restrictions for Bulgarians and Romanians in January 2014. UK mass media would present a general story about the situation of Bulgarian and Romanian migrants and complement it with further examples or stories about the troubled situation of Roma in these

² Other authors, however, cite larger number of Roma for Romania – around 1.5 million Roma according to the Research Institute for Quality of life in 1998; and around 730,00-970,000 based on a community survey in 2010 (Rughiniş 2010, p. 342).

countries. Thus, this research will distinguish itself from general narratives about Bulgarian and Romanian nationals or the Roma taken as a whole and present a better understanding of the experiences of Bulgarian Roma exclusively.

The second ‘unconventional’ aspect is the insider perspective which this work brings. At large, similar to the stories of international migrants striving to enter the EU, most of the stories and general knowledge about Roma is generated and *presented* through the lens of the media (which could be pro or anti-immigration, Roma, or both). This work instead, is generated through the stories of Bulgarian Romani migrants themselves and presented by one of them.

The issue of migration within the boundaries of the European Union, is very relevant as it seems to be the choice of Romanies, especially at times of uncertainty and crises. As Bauman (2007, p. 26) put it, we are living in a globalised world, or “open society,” which is uncertain and insecure. This insecurity can be witnessed though by the changes which (may) happen at any time in the current affairs of nation states (as we see through the emergence of conflicts in the Middle East) and internationally (as witnessed at times of economic and financial volatilities) which influence the life choices of people across the world. A ‘borderless’ EU can be thus challenged where borders, both mental and physical, still have important role to play as they influence migrants’ decisions.

1.5. Aims and objectives of the study

It is against this general backdrop presented thus far that this research should be studied. It will present a conventional reading of Bulgarian Romani migration and complement it with an insider perspective which will give this work an alternative angle. The research questions include not only the reasons for the migrations of Bulgarian Roma, which touch on the political, economic or legal aspects of their migrations, but also the effects and *transformation* as a consequence of their travels. It therefore, will address the often missing implied consequences of migration such as the subjective feelings, emotions and experiences of the Romani migrants. Thus, it is interested in processes such as *evolution* of Romani identities and *becoming* rather than static (end) results.

This study has three main overlapping and interrelated aims. Firstly, it aims to contribute to the field of Migration Studies by researching the under-researched group of Bulgarian Roma migrants at times of insecurity and uncertainty. Secondly, it aims to understand the transformation of identity and hybrid identities. It aims to offer a better understanding of the effects of migration on the individual Roma migrant and more precisely how they shape her identity, feelings (of belonging), customs and practices. And thirdly, it aims to find out how 'Romanipe' is mobilised, or how it is challenged due to processes of migration. It will thus contribute to the field of Romani studies by examining interpretations of the concept of 'Romanipe' – a concept which has been used by scholars in the field, however, without having an agreed and definite (or certain) definition attached to it.

The concept 'Romanipe' occupies a central place in this research and it will be discussed in greater detail later in this work. In order for greater clarity to be achieved for the purpose of this section it should be noted that 'Romanipe' is a word that exists in the Romani language. It can be also found, depending on the dialect used, as *Romaniya*, *Romaipe*, *Romanipen*, *Romanimos*, *Cigania* (Цѣгания/Цыгания) and others, while the main notion it carries would be the same. It is believed to refer to the cosmos of being a Roma, "their interpretations of the world" and "common cultural practices" (Vermeersch, 2007, p. 15), and everything which would define a person as Roma. Romani identity is an a-temporal identity based not on historical but cultural practices and observations of norms of behaviour (with the Roma and the non-Roma populations) (Mirga and Mroz, 1994, cited in Tebbutt and Saul, 2004). Arguably, a person would be considered (or accepted) as a Roma if they behave in accordance with the rules and norms of behaviour as they are accepted by the respective Romani community. Conversely, a Roma would no longer be considered as one should they fail to retain their 'Romanipe' (Tebbutt and Saul, 2004). In other words, 'Romanipe' is the way of life of a Roma which is based on cultural practices rather than on historical memories of the past as these practices are not based on national rhetoric, group leaders, or nationalistic movements.

This study seeks to:

- Explore the underlying reasons for Bulgarian Roma's decisions to migrate and the character of their migrations
- Understand the relationship between Romani identities, migrations and performance of identity
- Examine the attitudes to belonging, perceptions of 'home' and 'abroad' developed by Bulgarian Roma migrants
- Understand better the Romani identity and the interaction between (different) Romanies abroad
- Study the relationship between migration and migrants' accounts and interpretations of 'Romanipe'
- Understand the effects of migration on the emergence of new Romani consciousness and ways of belonging in EU

These questions will be addressed through the study of the four empirical chapters which will follow after Chapter 2 *Literature Review* which examines the relevant literature on migration, identity and Roma and the Chapter 3 *Methodology* where greater details will be given about this study, its research design and methods.

In Chapter 4 – *Migration*, we will examine the reasons for the migrations of Bulgarian Roma. We see that these could be individual, economic, and structural as well as in order to escape from undesired environments. In Chapter 5 *Belonging and Space* we will present the factors and feelings that are able to influence their perceptions of belonging. Here, we also examine how Romani migrants create their spaces abroad, the factors that make them feel 'at home,' as well as the concept of 'simultaneity.' Chapter 6 *Romani Identity as part of migration and Romanipe* will build on the already covered discussion and explore the notions of Romani transnationalism, identity construction and the notions of 'Romanipe.' The chapter presents an understanding of the Romani identity as a reaction and in relation to the external Gaze including the role of stereotypes in informing Romani identities. Also, the concepts, 'art of living' and 'selective multiculturalism' are introduced in order to better understand Romani identity and 'Romanipe.' The final empirical Chapter 7 *Eye-opening processes; Culture of Migration and Third Culture due to Processes of Migration* presents the ways individual migrants become affected due to their travels

and experiences from abroad. Notions of 'third culture' and hybridity are introduced to show the ways Bulgarian Romani migrants become deeply affected because of their travels that may be 'liberating' and at the same 'unsettling' in many ways. All their gained experiences taken together, lead to greater realisations and (personal) discoveries to the agents of migration themselves. Finally, this work will culminate with the Chapter 8, which will provide a general discussion and conclusions.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This research seeks to bring greater insight into the Romani mobilities in the European Union context. It is relevant due to two main reasons. On the one hand, one of the general stereotypes of the Roma is that they are a peripatetic group which makes them be generally perceived as a homogeneous group. And on the other hand, lifting of travel restrictions in the EU provides greater opportunities for many Roma to pursue better lives. Since this work seeks to better understand the impacts of recent Romani mobilities on their identities, perceptions, customs, behaviour and Romanipe, there are several key themes which emerge naturally in the context of this work. They are related with the discussions of identity, mobilities, migration, displacement, belonging, and Roma. In a growingly globalised world, one characterised with an increased use of internet, easier access to and spread of information, and new technologies, all contribute for the migratory experiences and for the displacement of both 'migrants' and 'non-migrants'. Furthermore, whether multiculturalism is celebrated or nationalist sentiments embraced in contemporary EU context, can be an informative issue as it could determine the behaviour, preferences and choices of identification of migrant and non-migrant Roma.

In late 2010 Germany's head of state, Angela Merkel, had declared publicly that the country's attempts to build a multicultural society have "utterly failed" (BBC News, 2010). What exactly Merkel meant seems to be gravitating towards certain ideas of citizenship based on a good command of the German language and immigrants wilful aspirations and actions towards their integration into the society. Whether multiculturalism, or the idea of people with various backgrounds, interests and orientations living happily by each other, is celebrated in Germany, or in Europe as a whole, today is whole different story. Taking into consideration some of the primary visions of the European Union (EU), a union characterized with an open market, advocacy of human rights and greater freedom of movement for goods, capital,

services and people, and comparing these with contemporary trends - such as the rise of nationalist sentiments across its member states, reinstating border controls (as recently observed in Germany and Hungary) and instances of human rights violations, it seems like the EU's visions and rhetoric can contradict current practices.

Even though a discussion on the EU as a political institution is not the primary focus of this work, it is pertinent to take this into consideration for two reasons: first of all it is considered as "the most ambitious and most successful example of peaceful international cooperation in world history" (Moravcsik, 2001, p. 114) and second, it envelops many aspects of the lives of those of us who are citizens of the European Union.

It is in this context of an ideally 'united' European Union and a greatly linked and inter-dependent world where people are enabled to perceive, learn, experience, 'live,' develop and work towards their pursuit of happiness and wellbeing. In light of people's constant search for happiness, wellbeing and development, we must recognise (despite its territory of over 4 million km² compared to the USA's 9.8 million km² or China's 9.7 million km²) how diverse the EU is – currently encompassing 28 Member States and a population of about 508 million, which makes it the third largest population after China and India.

Perhaps symptomatic of this diversity is the distribution and place of the Roma people of Europe. The case of the Roma seems to be a curious one. Even though recognised as currently belonging to the European space, the Roma were historically perceived as 'other' and different – due to their essentially non-European origins and language, their secluded communities, as well as their apparent physical and cultural differences and characteristics.

Migration within the boundaries of the European Union, is very relevant as it seems to be the choice of Romanies, especially at times of uncertainty and crises. In light of this discussion of the EU, the issues of identity formation, belonging and Othering emerge and form the focus of this work; Romani migration and displacement in a

growingly globalized and inter-connected world emerge as the key topics of this work.

2.2. Identity

There has been a huge debate on the question of 'who are the Roma people'? The way people choose to perceive and identify themselves might prove helpful in such a quest. One way to address this question might be to understand it as a way that someone's identity or self is a combination of several or numerous possible options; they can emerge and gain relevance in different and various situations and also combine and culminate in defining a person's identity. At the same time, it is hard to conceive it as detached from a broader (group) identity. If this work seeks to contribute towards the discussions of the Romani people, their identities and to give them greater voice, then we would have to consider the subjectivity of what they see or perceive as 'Romanipe' (the *Romaness*, or all that defines a person as Roma). The literature on identity indicates that it is difficult to speak of a person's 'essential' identity and this cannot be done in isolation from the political, power, social, and geographical settings. Prior to a more in-depth discussion on the question 'who the Roma are' it is necessary to address the question of how and why people (choose to) identify themselves in one way or another. The messages which individuals want to convey in a particular setting or situation can determine how they decide to identify themselves and, at the same time, their collective identities can be influenced by states' projects and visions about the essential qualities of their citizens.

The concept of identity has its origins in areas of philosophy, psychology, sociology and cultural theory. They all have tended to see identity, even though in their different ways, as related to a 'self' which is an autonomous entity shaped by the context, structures, social class, and the surroundings (Descartes, 1993; Durkheim, 1984; Freud, 1989; Marx, 1967). Foucault (1972), one of the pioneers of the poststructuralist movement, in contrast, challenged these ideas and argued that discourse can determine the way individuals and groups define themselves. Thus, the self is seen as never fixed or certain (Foucault, 1972).

Poststructuralist thinking has managed to gain relevance today when considering the concept of identity. The way people tend to identify themselves can be determined

by the meanings and expressions they would wish to convey about themselves. This could be influenced by the existence and presence of other people, by the surrounding environment, and places. As a result, identities are not only chosen but are unstable, multiple, constantly challenged, and negotiated (Gonzalez and Habel-Allan, 1994, p.82). Furthermore, they are 'managed', re-discovered and influenced by power and context (Valentine, 1993a; 1993b; Panelli, 2004).

Moreover, identities can help better our perceptions of meanings, other people, and other places (Panelli, 2004). Thus, one of the results which could come out of the construction of identities is the creation and emergence of boundaries. Defining differences, sameness, or boundaries play a crucial role in grasping the world and in our lives. Thus, while boundaries might be sought in ways to define ourselves, they create distances from others at the same time (Panelli, 2004). For Hetherington (2000), identity is how we associate and how we include or exclude others from membership of a particular identification.

Two of the ways identities could be created are 1) through discursive processes or narratives, and, 2) the ways in which they are practiced (Panelli, 2004). Discursive processes, on the one hand, might include narratives of the society expressed through culture, institutions, and master narratives through which history and society are communicated. On the other hand, identities could be performed through bodies, languages, dress style, actions and space (Panelli, 2004). Derrida (1998) goes even further and conveys that even language is not a sufficient element for the identification of groups. For him, when speaking or talking in their sole and own languages people try to use the languages as ways to demonstrate certain ideas, to pay allegiance to certain places or as a way to remind themselves, or promise, something to themselves (Derrida, 1998). Thus, when people refer to themselves as "I" they attempt to return to their own 'selves' in imaginative ways (Derrida, 1998, p.28).

Personal identities can have multiple layers and many sides which come to the fore at various instances and situations; however, it would be unwise to take the visions of the nation-states out of the whole picture. States' power and authority play crucial roles in the construction of national identities. States often endeavour to

create their 'ideal citizens' which depend on the visions of its leaders and on the messages they want to convey. The imagination and perceptions of states' leaders about who could be a "real citizen" often result in the disciplining of these citizens (Radcliffe, 2007, p.224). Therefore, the construction of identity is an on-going process which relies on power relations and on the disciplining of bodies occupying certain geographical locations and having specific meanings within a particular context. Thrift (2007, p.301) saw space and time not as "neutral grids" or "containers" which are filled with meaning but as "what we labour to produce as we go along." Disciplining of bodies was the aim of colonial administrators from early 16th century in South America through the 19th century environmental racialisms (Radcliffe 2007). Such projects have been often countered, however, by those subject to these projects by resisting, appropriating and reordering (Radcliffe 2007). Thus, socially constructed identities could be appropriated and reoriented by those subject to racialisation. The Roma people could be found all across Europe and within specific national boundaries. Their inclusion or 'integration' depends on the projects envisioned by the respective nation-states. This could explain some of the observed differences between Roma throughout Europe such as the use of language, religion, language dialects, observations of customs etc.

However, there are observed differences between Roma found within the boundaries of a given nation-state which on its part gives ground for them to be seen, by certain scholars, as a heterogeneous group. Even though space or in this context nation-states are socially constructed and dependent on relations, it is not totally coherent. Societies or various social groups, as Massey (2007) puts it, live and exist in their own specific and unique space which has its own environment. For Massey (2007) space is 1) a process of interaction – a product of interrelations, 2) allows for multiplicity to exist – it is multiple and more than one voice can exist at the same time, 3) it is the sphere which gives rise to disruption, it can be disruptive. Thus, in certain geographical locations /spaces/places, regardless of how coherent or homogeneous they might seem, it is possible for multiple visions, ideas and experiences to co-exist affecting and reinforcing each other, even though they might come into conflict with each other (Massey 2007). In this way, this can explain the observed differences which exist between seemingly 'similar' groups and the differences of their

identities. Therefore, to speak about 'the characteristics' of a people who occupy a certain geographical location, or a nation-state, in a way which would suggest that they are 'homogeneous' or similar, would face a lot of challenges. There are differences which can be observed between the citizens of a nation-state regardless of the fact that they are commonly united by their citizenship, language or other factors.

2.2.1. Perceiving the world around us

The previous section saw that it is hard to get a good and representative idea about the world around us. Getting a good understanding of the surrounding world, and in this context differences associated with identification is not straightforward. According to Thrift (2007, p.297), it is impossible for us to get a clear and proper understanding of our surrounding world. It is so, as we as humans are situated in the middle of the world itself, "[...] co-constructing it with numerous human and non-human others for numerous ends (or more accurately beginnings)." In order for a better perception of the world to be achieved, Soja (2007, p.262) proposed the world to be studied not only through its social and historical aspects but also its space and this he called "trialectics of being." Also known as "third space" or "lived space" it is vital, necessary and fundamental in order to understand our lives and times as the three aspects are inter-related and work together (Soja 2007, p.262). Things should not to be considered/perceived in a dualistic way –good or bad – as there must be another way of looking and perceiving them, other dimensions, which are of equal importance. Getting a practical or more realistic knowledge of identities situated in certain places/spaces would require continuous expansion of knowledge and open-mindedness which might enable us to see beyond what is presently known as 'true'. Soja (2007) maintained that the full meanings of identity could be only understood when fully practiced and lived, while links, or associations, have little meaning due to their unstable nature. "Lived space" is the meeting ground of something new to emerge – a hybrid, a "mestiza", as Anzaldua (1987, cited in Soja, 2007, p.274) puts it, which cannot be defined through the boundaries of rigid differentiations. Equally, 'third space' is seen as a hybridity which enables other voices and positions to exist (Bhabha, 1990). It establishes new structures of authority, new political initiatives which are equally true even though inadequately understood.

2.2.2. The creation of boundaries, the 'Other' and stereotypes

As seen above, the ways we identify ourselves could not be taken in isolation from the broader context, the geographical location or the willingness of authorities and the messages they wish to convey. Also, from the sections above we could infer that it is hard to perceive the world in a dualistic or essentialised fashion of 'either-or' as this would leave out other qualities which are equally important and true. A person's identifications depend also on the creation of boundaries and rely on the existence of Others, which help them define better their own. Thus, stereotypes are created to help us perceive easier the surrounding world.

The Roma of Europe find themselves physically, socially and politically marginalized. They have often been seen and portrayed as Other – or different than the norm, or the main stream population. Othering, the creation of boundaries and relying on stereotypes play equally import roles for the identification of and defining the Roma people themselves.

Cavallaro (2001) conveys that the Other is the factor which enables us to create a self-image and we rely on it when perceiving knowledge. The world is thus inter-subjective and each individual's interpretations always interact with those of other people (Cavallaro, 2001). The concept of the Other is necessary for the perception of the world around us and our self-realisation, but it needs to be discarded once this has been achieved. This is because relying on dichotomies and differences between the Other and the self would impede better knowledge and greater realisation. Teresa de Lauretis (1987) argues that clear dichotomies between male or female, for instance, offer little and are not intelligible as there are wider frames of cultural representations such as class, race, or sexuality. Similarly, relying on dichotomies and borderlines would not be enough when considering hybrid groups or mixtures, "mestizas" (Anzaldua, 1987, cited in Soja, p.274). These groups of people could be regarded as insiders and outsiders at the same time and the boundaries of the nation-state are sufficient when defining such groups.

For Bhabha (1994) stereotypes are simplifications which are a fixed form of representation which denies the play of difference. The 'Other', or anyone/anything who/which is seen as different in a fundamental way, plays a key role in defining not

only the outside world but also the self (Said, 1978). Sibley (1995) conveys that Others disturb the view of the observer and stereotypes are created in order to remove these Others from the scene. People and the world around us are thus divided into good and bad objects and these that are seen as 'bad' are projected onto bad stereotypes (Sibley, 1995). In Gilman's view, "... for the non-pathological individual, the stereotype is a momentary coping mechanism, one that can be used and then discarded once anxiety is overcome" (Gilman, 1985p. 18).

Similarly, wishful thinking and retaining the images, qualities and the messages which groups wish to project could be linked to the Object Relations Theory (ORT). There is a link between ORT and images which play an important role in the construction of stereotypes. Objects are seen as playing a key role for the emotional life of persons and ORT could be regarded as a complex relationship between the Self to the other. Dealing with the earliest experiences and defences, Object Relations Theory tries to distinguish between what is self and the other, inside and outside, as well as the good or bad parts of the self or the other. It also refers to the complexities of external relations with others which can be seen as peoples' fantasies, desires and fears linked with images of representations with other people (Flanagan, 2011). Both the self and stereotypes are products of culture and society and verbal and visual images are things to which people relate, because they are culturally rooted (Sibley, 1995, p.29). Viewing certain groups as close to nature, such as native Australians, Gypsies, or Africans has influenced the way they have been perceived. They were thus seen as different from the 'civilized' societies and this has legitimized their exploitation and exclusion. Mayall (1988) has noted that in racist discourses 'the Gypsies' are seen as closer to animals in comparison with any European race. The negative treatment of Roma in Europe is also evident by the harsh laws, transportation and execution in several European countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Mayall, 1988). Stereotypes could be eradicated or rejected, by engaging with the Other (Sibley, 1995). This might result into diminishing uncertainties and perceived threats. However, there is a danger which comes with limited engagement or "superficial encounter" which should be avoided and it could be even more damaging than ignorance especially if this knowledge were situated in academia or state authorities (Sibley, 1995, p.29).

The existence of 'others' within the boundaries of a nation-state, as is the case with ethnic groups such as the Roma, can be seen as helping to contribute, maintain and sustain the existence of each group (Roma and non-Roma) – mutually helping each to define itself in relation to the 'Other'. In the context of the nation-state, on the one hand, it might be formed by the ideas and notions of a racial or political unity, encompassed by distinct borders. On the other hand, the existence of the various and separate nation-states depends on the existence of something else, an 'other', which should be portrayed as different due to differences in culture, politics and other group specifics or characteristics.

As we saw in the sections above, defining identity requires the inclusion of the factors of setting, power and authority, context and time. It is closely linked with the messages people wish to convey and depends on the existence of Other which would help them better define themselves. The maintaining of boundaries creates Others and relies on stereotypes which help to perceive and better understand the world around us. Relying and believing in labels and stereotypes, however, is dangerous as this prevents us from perceiving better and 'true' knowledge. One could reason that the world is defined by and relies heavily on dichotomies and borders, as seen for example by the existence of clearly defined nation-states, boundaries crossing or maintenance and all these play key roles not only for the ways people might choose to identify ourselves, but also when they 'feel out of place.' Even though relying on boundaries can prove helpful in perceiving the world around us they are challenged by movements and the mobilities of people. The following sections will give an overview of the role of mobilities³ and perspectives and how could they be involved with perceiving migration and identity formation.

2.3. Migration as part of mobilities

This work considers migration in two main ways. On the one hand, as a process in which a body is relocated physically and on the other, as a process linked with

³Following Urry's (2007) definition of *mobilities*, this work considers it as *social mobilities* which could be upward and/or downward, a form of migration, or being on the move, and physically relocating to another country or continent in search of a better life, and also as virtual movement – the movement of information, images through networks and technologies.

mobility and displacement. Even though the two are linked, Romani migration in Europe seems to lack the latter take – one in which feelings and emotions linked to displacement result into other feelings of transformation and travel. There is limited available research dealing with the role of the more conceptual types of Romani migration and the aim of this section is to go through some of the main takes when it comes to understanding migration.

Understanding migration could be considered as a process intricately linked with the concepts of movement, displacement and mobility. Traditionally migration has been viewed as a form of displacement in which a body physically relocates. Other authors, however, have discussed migration in relation to the concept of movement and mobilities and by extension the distinction between migrant and non-migrant (Bergson, 1911; Adey, 2010). For such authors movement is a part of each and every one of us while immobile matter is only an illusion. Thus, perspectives play a key role in the realisation of what is mobile or immobile.

Mobility for its part can be seen as physical – “the movement of people, ideas or goods across territory,” and social – “change in social status” (Gregory et al., 2009, p.457). Peter Adey (2010) conveyed that mobilities occupy, shape, and determine our lives. Our lives are surrounded by objects such as building structures and other things which might seem ‘sedentary’ or ‘static’; however, they all are subject to a certain kind of mobility (they could all be considered as a combination and culmination of materials and building blocks brought and constructed by vehicles, workers, etc.). As such one of Adey’s (2010) main arguments is that without mobilities our lives would not be possible and even life would not exist as the sum parts of life are products or end results of mobility. Henri Bergson (1911) stated there could be no such a thing as “immobility” and that immobile things are only an illusion; as he has put it: “there is no inert or invariable object which moves: movement does not imply a mobile” (Bergson, 1911, p.302, cited in Adey, 2010, p.6). Others, such as the Greek thinker Lucretius saw the world composed by a constant movement, and the result of the never-ending oscillation of particles such as atoms, electrons and free radicals. Thus, even seemingly “immobile” objects can be considered as mobile as they are composed of hundreds of thousands of particles and elements which allow them to

take their current forms (Adey, 2010, p.7). Even a simple trivial everyday activity such as walking could be seen as unsettling the natural state and balance of hundreds of thousands of other smaller beings, things, and particles with our encounter with them while we step on the ground and move around; and nevertheless, people seldom take into account these facts.

2.3.1. Perspectives

Distinguishing between mobile and less mobile is also informed and determined by our perspectives and our evaluations of what and/or who moves. The concept of mobility could therefore be considered in relation to other things. Similar to the concept of the Other and its role in the self-identification of persons, our perceptions of what is mobile could be determined by that which is not. The fact that a person is not involved in physical movement should not suggest that they are immobile. A Roma, for instance, who has spent the majority of her/his life in only one place, should not be considered as sedentary or a non-migrant. Conversely, those Roma who take up a migrant way of life for a prolonged period of time might fail to describe themselves as migrants, as their sense of displacement can be considered as irrelevant, and therefore subjectively not appreciated as 'drastic' or 'great' (Baudrillard, 1989, 1990; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Shubin, 2011).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) similarly give another way to consider movement and migration. The "rhizome", which has no beginning or an end, is able to thrive everywhere and at any time, it cuts across boundaries, opposed to the situated and traceable (family) trees, the rhizome could be associated to the nomads and migrants wandering in often marginalized space. In Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) work such space is associated with the *desert* – a liberating space where nomads and migrants are often found. In this case, the concepts of the rhizome and the desert were contrasted to contemporary perceptions of the nation-state where boundaries and margins occupy relevant importance. Travelling 'Gypsies' can be seen as similar to third world migrants or desert nomads in the sense that they are perceived as ever-travelling nomads who live on the margins of contemporary societies and often outside the law in the European context. Similar to immigrants from the 'third world', European Roma share parallel "theoretical spaces not through structural

relations of historically specific diasporas but through a kind of generalized poetics of displacement” (Kaplan, 1996, pp.87-88). In this way, Roma are essentially seen in almost all parts of the world as constantly mobile group of people whose sense of travel is innate to their nature and way of living. Also, that is why very often the Roma, or the ‘Gypsies’ (as they are more widely referred to), are romanticised and essentialized occupying certain ideas of the perceptions of the general societies.

The ‘Gypsies’ are perceived wrongly as an innately homogeneous and predominately nomadic group. Migration and mobility should not take only physical displacements however. Grossberg (1988) argues that mobility is not disconnected from economic and sociocultural factors, as such persons who stay put in one place should not be considered as immobile due to the possibility of them being displaced or migratory as a result of their communication with family members who are abroad who may share accounts of other environments, or by the simple acts of watching television, using the internet, or reading books. In this section we saw that there are other perspectives of migration and travel which even though conceptual are equally important. The point of view and our positions and relations with matter, subjects and objects are integral in the way we perceive and define what is mobile and mobility, displacement and migration. Since mobility and by extension migration is in many ways subjective, this research is curious to potentially address the impact that different types of migration may or may not have on identity.

It is not only perspectives which can contribute to peoples’ forms of mobility but also nation-states’ decisions and policies, lifting of boundaries and leading a transnational way of life can also prove relevant. As we saw in the sections above there are factors in migration, which even though conceptual, able to influence the migratory experiences, feeling and identities of migrants. The next section will examine the role of nation-states informing migrants’ identifications, feelings of belonging and ‘home.’

2.4. Transnationalism and Roma

On a macro-level the nation-state seems to occupy a major role and a special relationship in the analysis of migration and movement. Some see that the role of the

nation-state is waning and globalization is breaking down some of its binding forces (Bauman, 2007; Castles and Miller, 2003; Gardner, 1993; Levitt and Schiller, 2008). Multiple citizenship and nationalities, and the concept of simultaneity are some of the themes which emerge from this discourse. Others, at the same time, have managed to show that the nation-state still has an important role to play and continues to serve as a vital source of identification and inform peoples' actions (Esser, 2008; Levitt and Schiller, 2008). Now, people might decide to physically occupy a space, while they believe they belong to another.

Coming to a clear definition of someone's place, home, or belonging can be challenging. In the context of the EU, where borders arguably are less significant, the nation-state and their borders still continue to influence and define feelings of belonging, place or home. The question of Romani identification in the context of transnational migration can be seen as further complicated phenomenon. On the one hand, Roma who stay in their countries of origin often prefer to hide their ethnicities, or simply to not reveal them, and on the other hand, while being abroad, Romanies have a legitimate reason to identify as nationals of their countries of origin. This research is interested in better understanding in what conditions, when and why Roma would prefer to reveal their ethnic identities while abroad or choose to promote their national identities.

Stemming from the premise that the Roma, regardless of their perceived differences in the various countries, face certain commonalities make them to be growingly perceived as a transnational group. It is not only a perceived common Indian origin and language which are shared among the different Romani communities but also contemporary issues which they face in different EU countries such as lack of representation (on a national and international levels), lack of proper education, racial discrimination, prejudice, inadequate inclusion into the mainstream societies, poverty, unemployment, or specific issues which Roma women can face (European Commission, 2011). Romani transnationalism is thus seen and recognized as a necessary and vital way to promote Romani nationalism, greater international recognition and representation. As a result, it is being promoted by some Romani

activists, and academics⁴. Even though there are several takes on transnationalism, this work is inclined to consider it as one in which the nation space is not considered as being a prime reference point when analysing activities and identities. Taking a more generalized definition of the term it considers it as the multiple ties and connections which bring people together (Vertovec, 1999). As a result, this work tends to concentrate on the connections between individuals, communities and societies across borders which can create changes in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres of countries of origin and countries of destination (International Organization for Migration, 2010).

The way the Romani communities perceive the EU guarantees and freedoms is another central aspect which this work seeks to discover. Furthermore, it will attempt to find out in what ways origin societies could be influenced due to greater Romani mobilities or the emergence or presence of a “culture of migration” (Kandel and Massey, 2002, p.1504). The concept “culture of migration” sees three main forms which need to be present – 1) transfer and exchange of goods and technologies, information and cultural values, 2) the norms, values and ideologies of the community that evaluates the values attached to migration, and 3) the social and cultural changes as a result of the fact that societies have to adjust their ways of life to the absence of migrants from their home societies (Kandel and Massey, 2002, p.1504). It is relevant for this work to evaluate the degree of culture of migration among Bulgarian Roma and the implications it brings to the origin societies.

2.4.1. Declining role of nation-states

One of the takes on transnationalism considers it largely as positive as it not only brings new and positive developments for societies and people but also for bringing new relationships between them (Castles and Miller, 2003; Levitt and Schiller, 2008). Bauman (2007) argued that the globalised world of today eliminates some of the binding forces of the nation-state. As a result, the function of the nation-state is seen as waning and this emerges from discourses on ways or modes of “being” (referring to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in), ways

⁴ The vision of the International Romani Union (IRU) could be seen as one such example.

or modes of “belonging” (practices that indicate a process of identification or conscious connection to a particular group), the difficulties to draw a clear-cut line between here and there, or what is home, or a country of origin (Levitt and Schiller, 2008, p.189). Katy Gardner (1993, pp.1-2), conversely, conveys that there are different types of belonging and that there is a distinction and interplay between the notions of “desh” (home) and “bidesh” (foreign context) in her research on Sylhetis in Britain and Bangladesh. In Gardner’s (1993) view “desh” should be seen as the source for identification and spiritual power of persons while “bidesh” is the place which sustains migrants’ selves by providing vital economic and political powers.

Other theorists posit that people may pay allegiance to both their countries of origin and host countries and this should not be seen as grounds for concern to any one of them. Introducing the concept of “simultaneity”, Levitt and Shiller (2008, p.182) argue that it is possible for people to pay allegiance to both their countries of origin and their host societies without either posing a threat to each other. Not only do host and origin societies not pose threats one to the other but they can reinforce each other. Global movements of people and their settlement in various places result in the increase of diversity of societies and into broader social, cultural and political developments (Castles and Miller, 2003).

As we saw above, authors see a greatly diversified and transnational world as a positive phenomenon which contributes towards greater cultural and political advancements, as well as transfer of goods, information, cultural values, norms, and ideologies. The questions of ‘home’ and the factors which contribute to the feelings of ‘at home’ are relevant as they contribute further to the discussion of transnationalism, identity and displacement.

2.4.2. Home and network capital

Whether the role of nation-states is declining and the way people feel in different countries and environments could be determined by a person’s *network capital*. This could be also linked with the notions of ‘ways of being’ and ‘ways of belonging’ which are of particular interest to this research as this can possibly shed light not only to the perceived “network capital” (Elliot and Urry, 2010, p.11) (a composition

of factors which can enhance migrants' experiences abroad) of the Romani migrants, but also their relations with mobilities and migration. The availability of network capital can lead to feelings of being 'at home' and this could further relate to feelings of belonging and being among migrants.

Elliot and Urry (2010, p.11) used the concept "network capital". It is seen by the authors as the factor which influences how people experience and interact with mobility. Romani migration abroad for the purposes of employment, for instance, can be determined by their acquaintances abroad, connection and networks, family, relatives and friends. As a result, "network capital" is seen as all elements which enable persons to lead highly mobile ways of life. These could be documents, visas, money, qualifications, family and friends, being able to move independently, walk and carry luggage, access information, communication devices, personal or social contacts etc. They all combine to create and enable a person with a noticeably high level of geographical mobility the feeling of being "at home" anywhere in the world. Regardless of their constant mobile lives, people with perceived good network capital are able to live happily and feel comfortable in a new setting (Elliot and Urry, 2010). Therefore, it might prove difficult to give a clear-cut definition of 'home' for people having highly mobile lives and good network capital. Conversely, people with perceived lower network capital might feel uncomfortable in new and foreign environments. They could as a result still miss their origin societies due to lack of qualifications, unfamiliarity with knowledge, lack of friends and networks, or language barriers. In the latter scenario, migrants might decide to cling to their traditions and customs, and refrain from getting fully involved in the foreign environment. In this way, the availability of network capital can determine and be linked to migrants' feelings and perceptions of 'home'.

Perceiving 'home' could be complicated. The meanings of 'home' today could be seen as transformed and implicated with the concepts of 'here' and 'there'. Being transnational could imply a change of social meaning, attitudes, and experiences. Migrants thus, in various occasions, may decide to be associated with their host countries while being in their countries of origin, and conversely, with their origin countries while being abroad. As a result, it might become difficult to draw a clear

dividing line and a clear distinction between 'here', 'there', or 'home' and hence paying allegiances to such respective spaces.

A transnational sense might be promoted or encouraged also in those who do not lead a life on-the-move. Rebecca Golbert (2001) has described the case of young Jews from Ukraine, who have developed a transnational orientation towards other Jewish communities elsewhere such as in Ukraine, Israel, USA, Germany and other countries based on common histories, ideas, identities or shared experiences. As indicated by the example of Golbert (2001), even those who do not necessarily move away from their origin places and stay in their origin countries might have world-views of life which are centred around more than one locality. In a similar way, this research is interested to discover if Romani migration could result in greater transnational orientation of Roma due to shared and common experiences of Roma elsewhere. In other words, it seeks to see if Romani migration could result in bringing greater conscience and knowledge of Roma all across the EU space or other parts of the world based on beliefs of common origin, shared feelings of past and present life experiences, history, customs etc. There is another key consideration, however, which deserves our reflection and this is the question of how identities and cultures are shaped or challenged through the process of migration. Even though, on the one hand, the country of origin might be the source of a person's identity, on the other, dual citizenship/nationality and transnationalism might be the source of multiple identities; this process might also be seen as transformational. It might have implications towards the breaking of certain hierarchies, gender relations, consumer habits or marriage practises (Vertovec, 2008, pp.160-164).

The notions of 'network capital' and feelings of 'at home' can influence each other. Feelings of comfortable lives in migrants can be determined by their availability of capital, documents, networks, friends, knowledge, and other. Also, as seen from the discourse of dual orientations, despite the difficulty to draw a clear line between here and there, or 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging', or feelings of 'at home' migrants and non-migrants are able to maintain strong sense of connection towards different places and people regardless of their places of origin.

2.4.3. The role of the nation-state as still relevant

Even though transnationalism is evaluated as positive as it brings greater diversity, developments and relations, people still prefer to cling to certain institutional “cores” (Esser, 2008, p.336) such as peculiar identities, cultures and ethnic or national specificities.

National cultures still play important roles influencing the behaviour of migrants. Mass migrations of people towards the western parts of Europe or western countries are two trends taking place in the present day (Esser, 2008). These mass movements are also compounded by the fact that immigrants very often bring with them their peculiar social, cultural, religious, ethnic characteristics, and histories which could often differ from the ones generally observed in the host countries/societies. Regardless of the fact that immigrants may stay for protracted periods of time abroad, they may not relinquish their distinct cultural, social or ethnic peculiarities and decide to stay in close contact with their countries of origin. Even in cases where they face certain forms of marginalisation and social exclusion migrants can still choose to stress their ethnic and national identities even though this might be not in their true interests (Esser, 2008).

Regardless of nation-states not being directly involved, national cultures and institutions still play a major role determining and influencing the behaviour of migrants. In Esser’s (2008, p.336) opinion, there are certain cultural and institutional “cores” which act as points of reference and it is in the interest of actors to orient themselves towards them. In other words, such ‘cores’ act as gravitating points which influence the behaviour, preferences and life choices of migrants.

People do not act always in their best interests, in a rational and thus predictable way. Social behaviour should be understood as one in which “lower-level means are invested as input factors to produce higher-level goal(s)” (Esser, 2008, p.316). Here, in Esser’s (2008) opinion it is in the interests of migrants to do their best to meet the cultural practices of the host societies. These should be also seen as cultural aspirations and goals which should act as reference points, “...thing[s] worth striving for”, and the host societies should act as the “design for group living” (Esser, 2008,

p.316). The fact that groups fail to give up their specific cultural capital, exemplified by the intergenerational research conducted by the author, reveals that social actors and groups might decide to act in ways which sometimes are seen as 'irrational' or not in their 'true interest'. When discussing questions of integration of the Roma very often they are being accused for failing and being unwilling to accept the norms, behaviour or language of the major societies. As a result, the generally observed state of Roma and the issues they face all across Europe is seen as an outcome of their own unwillingness to integrate themselves; instead Romani groups decide to stick to their own centres of culture, behaviour, language or customs.

Even though some authors consider transnationalism as an observable fact which 'washes away' some of the binding forces of nation-states, groups still might prefer to preserve the connections with certain centres which might be gravitating towards nation-states, cultural understandings, religious or ethnic communities. Thus, we see that ethnic group capital, such as language or ethnic social capital, even though seen as 'less-efficient' or 'lower level, still fails to give way to other forms of capital such as the cultural goals/ones offered by the host societies. Similarly, in the context of Romani migrants abroad this work seeks to discover if they intentionally see the benefits/reasons for maintaining their own cultural and institutional "cores".

In the sections so far we saw that defining identities requires a well-rounded consideration of context, setting, power relations and the messages which people want to convey. Furthermore, we saw that perceiving the surrounding world depends on a person's perspectives and position in it. Migration, apart from being linked with the physical re-location to another place, could be also conceptual and mobilities can play central role and further contribute to better perceiving migration. As we are living in an age which is informed by institutions such as nation-states, cultures, language, history, there are two waves of reasoning – a transnational world brings positive developments and at the same time there are certain peculiarities which still inform people's and migrants decisions and actions.

The following sections will further contribute to this discussion by concentrating primarily on issues linked with the Roma, Romani migration, what is known by the

Roma, how are they perceived along with their multiple identities and group formations.

2.5. Roma

2.5.1. Romani 'representation'

The relationships between Roma and non-Roma, it could be said, has been informed and influenced by what each group knows and thinks about the other. There is a danger and possibility for researchers to reproduce false interpretations and 'facts' about the Roma, their culture, customs and origins, by simply repeating them ad infinitum. This could be also linked with the earlier discussions on identities being multi-layered, having several aspects and being exposed or hidden at various times. For Hancock (2004), it is very difficult to discern between what might count as scholarly and credible work and the bulk of the other 'specialists' which write and deal with the Roma and are in a position to judge and comment. Even though not all attempts to represent the Romani culture are wrong, it is seen as the result of misguided and misinformed hypotheses finding their way into conventional accounts, and as a result being repeated and perpetuated by subsequent authors unchecked and unverified (Hancock 2004). Taking the Romani language, for example, which has been of interest for linguists and Romani scholars, a 'fact' that used to prevail, wrongly, among scholars claimed that it does not have words for "truth", "beautiful", "read", "write", "quiet" and others. Eleanor Smith (1943, p.59) has been insisting that the words for "divine" and "devilish" are the same, however, this has been refuted revealing these words which could not be more different – *devlikano* (divine) and *bengesko* (devilish) (Hancock, 2004, p.89). Also, the idea that the Romani language lacks words for "possession" and "duty" has managed to prevail and has been repeated by ten different sources for more than a century by its successors (Hancock, 1997). As the Romani *chip* (Romani language) could play as the factor which could unify all Roma, regardless of their geographical location or the respective dialects they use, it could also be the source of their separation based on the possible differences which could exist or because of the non-use of the language.

The relationships between Roma and Gadjo (the non-Romani) influence their

portrayal. The history of the representations and self-representations of Roma can be seen as a result of a series of negotiations between Romani “actors” or role-players and the gadjo (Tebbutt and Saul, 2004). Taking into account the meaning of role-playing or the actor, this might suggest the notion of performance which can be linked with being “part of an enterprise” and at the same time acting a role “imposed by a third party” (Tebbutt and Saul, 2004, p.1). Thus, one can see the interplay of seeking to satisfy external expectations (the gaze of non-Roma, other Roma, of the vast majority), on the one hand, and being involved with acting due to having the abilities to entertain or play a certain role (being a good actor), on the other.

Ken Lee (2004) himself insists that the Roma are victims of imposed misrepresentations which have resulted to forms of selective amnesia by supposed experts. He also urges us to consider discourses about Roma coming from non-conventional sources as they might have important messages to convey as well. Similarly, Colin Clark (2004, pp.228-244) illustrates how images of “pretend” ‘Gypsies’ give rise to further images from the outside by so-called ‘experts’ and are as a result reflected and perpetuated to the present day’s Romani images and stereotypes. Also, Clark (2004, p.244) contends that once established, stereotypes are difficult to challenge; that should not mean that they are completely rigid, but stereotypes could take different “shades” in different situations, contexts and geographical locations. As seen above, stereotypes are created in order to help people form their perception of the surrounding world. Stereotypes are also seen as ‘simplifications’ (Bhabha, 1994) which deny the play of difference. People thus can be divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and this is projected onto their stereotypes (Sibley, 1995).

Additionally, the bulk of the academic work stems from scholars with non-Romani origins and this contributes to the difficulty of grasping the realities which the Romani people face, the discussion regarding their ‘essential identities,’ who the Roma are and who can be called a Roma. Furthermore, this could be linked with the question of defining ‘Romanipe’ – a complex term which is meant to signify the essence of being Roma or the set of factors, laws, behaviour which define the Roma people.

Thomas Acton (2004, p.104) gives a critical evaluation of what he called the Dutch “deconstructivists,” referring to the works of Leo Lucassen (1998), Wim Willems (1997) and the Dutch school of historical racism studies founded by Dik van Arkel which sought to reconstruct Western European understandings of ‘Gypsies’ in the last 20 years. The above mentioned authors challenge the view that the Roma are an ethnic group and assert that anybody can claim membership of that group. Reasoning that the Roma are as real as the Dutch, Acton (2004) argues that people tend to associate certain qualities and attributes to other people.

This argument points out that the Roma are a real community and not a social construct, as well as the fact that there are very few Roma voices included in their analyses, which highlights a need for the development of research that includes the voices and works of representatives of the Roma groups. Therefore, while the majority of previous research has taken an ‘outside-looking in’ perspective, in contrast this research seeks to provide an inward-looking approach.

2.5.2. Migrations of the Roma

Understanding who the Roma are necessitates understanding the ways they perceive themselves, their feelings of belonging and their identities. In order for a good understanding about the Roma people of Europe to be reached, a brief historical account of the Roma in Europe should be given. One of the reasons for the situations the Roma find themselves today in Europe is because of their essentially non-European origins and language (along with different complexions, dressing styles, customs or life-style) which has resulted in their Othering by mainstream Europe (even though that might be contested by several authors).

Romani migration has been evaluated negatively over the course of the years – witnessed historically with anti-Gypsy laws evident throughout, and in contemporary times as seen in 21st century and the (re)actions of countries such as Italy, France or Germany (Crowe, 2003). It seems like the mobilities of Roma throughout Europe have been countered and evaluated by major societies thus informing policies and legislation. There is little available literature, however, dealing with the perspectives of the Roma people themselves on their migratory experiences today. Thus, an

insider perspective about the migratory processes of contemporary Romani mobilities and migrations is seen as relevant and thus sought by this work.

As we saw earlier, one of the interpretations of mobilities is the physical re-location of persons due their search for better life or other reasons. There is no official data about the time of the arrival of the 'Gypsies' in the European continent, nor what the reasons were for their migrations. Some accounts trace their arrival back to 13th -14th century AD. It is unclear what made this people leave the Indian sub-continent but they are generally believed to have originated from central India, possibly in the modern Indian state of Rajasthan, migrating to the northwest around 250 BC. A common belief about the Romani arrival in Europe was that they have come as bands of 'sly rascals' carrying fake holy pilgrims (Grellmann, 1787, p.104, cited in Lee, 2004, p.33-34). Another belief about the origins of the Roma is linked with the exonym 'Gypsy' deriving from 'Egyptian' based on their own discourse as a people coming from Egypt as pilgrims. Lee (2004) argues that the Roma have been and can be considered as colonial subjects in terms of the facts of their misrepresentations, structural inequalities, marginalization, exploitation and denying language, culture and dignity. French demographer, Alfred Sauvy identified three worlds in 1952 – extended later by Canadian Chief George Manuel (1974, p.1, cited in Lee, 2004, p.33) adding a "Fourth World which is being composed of the indigenous peoples of the world. The first and the second worlds are mainly colonizers, while the Third and the Fourth are the worlds of colonized subjects. While the majority of Romanies occupy the First and Second Worlds, they experience their lives in worlds that share a lot of the characteristics of the Third and Fourth Worlds (Lee, 2004, p.33)⁵. This could be explained by the Roma being not completely embraced by the societies in which they live, being exploited and marginalized for different reasons and therefore massively discriminated against. In section 2.3 *The creation of boundaries, the Other and stereotypes*, we saw that the Other emerges when people seek to define

⁵ The Roma have been occupying the lowest social strata throughout Europe and often facing chronic poverty and malnutrition. The 2012 survey of the UNDP found that "many Roma face discrimination and social exclusion living in marginalised and very poor socio-economic conditions"; indicators showed that in the 11 EU Member States which were studies the socio-economic situation of the Roma in the areas of employment, education, housing and health "is not satisfactory and is worse, on average, than the situation of the non-Roma living in close proximity," showing also a continued Romani discrimination (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012, p.12).

themselves, their self-images, and also the surrounding world. Linked with the notions of differences, sameness and boundaries, even though Othering might be necessary and important in gaining knowledge, Cavallaro (2001) argued that it should be abandoned once gaining insight has been achieved. However, groups are helped, maintained and sustained by the existence of Others and thus, various groups such as the Roma are portrayed as 'different from the norm' due to observed differences such as cultural practices, norms, ideas, complexion, social status and other. The 'Gypsy' appeared for Nando Sigona (2003) as a social construct embedded in the capacity of social groups to impose official labels. He argued that the Otherness of the Gypsy is situated in the middle between the enemy and the stranger. The 'Gypsy' was seen as a stranger due to the fact that they receive various shapes according to the political convenience of the majority (Sigona, 2003). This could be also linked with the exonyms that the Roma have acquired in Central and South-Eastern Europe – Cigani, Ziganere, Tsinganes, Zingeneur, etc. The origin of these exonyms could be traced back to *athiganoi* – the name of the heretic Gnostic-Manichean sect of the 7th century spread in western Anatolia. The name of the sect appears to originate from ancient Greek, *thinganein*, to finger touch, meaning "untouchable" (Sigona, 2003, p.71).

Thus far policy-makers, the media, authorities and the masses have evaluated and reacted towards the Roma and their migrations and displacements. From 1300s onwards there have been a number of anti-Gypsy practices all across Europe (Crowe, 2003; Hancock, 1987; 2000; Tomova, 2000). Similar practices have been recurring and observed in the expulsion and fingerprinting of Roma in Italy in the summer of 2008 and their deportation from Germany and France in 2010, 2012⁶ and 2015 and actions of rejections have continued incessantly till today throughout Europe. The European Roma and Travellers Forum (2015) writes: "[f]rom Finland to France and Italy, from Bulgaria, through Hungary and Serbia to Albania the summer months of 2015 have witnessed an unprecedented upsurge of evictions from Roma settlements, some peaceful, some brutal but always marked by the policy of rejection."

⁶ On France – (BBC News, 2010b.); On Italy – (BBC News, 2008; Kubosova, 2008; Kington, 2008), On Germany – (European Roma Rights Centre, 2003).

As we saw earlier, negative labels and connotations can shape and influence the way people think about those who are being mobile and their relationships (Adey, 2010). The role of the mass media can be seen as a key factor which has been contributing heavily to the perpetuation of stereotypes and labels attached to the Roma. Tabloid press and media are in condition to promote rage and hate speech aiming at the Gypsies and as a result, portrayed as one of the greatest threats to peace and security in the UK. Newspapers *The Sun* and *The Mail* have proclaimed that the Roma are in a situation to get away because of “human rights” after stealing children and devastating the countryside (Clements, 2007, p.295). *The Sun* newspaper campaign has asked its readers in 2005 to relate their “gypsy stories” with its front-page headline “SUN WAR ON GYPSY FREE-FOR-ALL” (Clements, 2007, p.295).

2.5.3. What is known about the Roma

This work seeks to contribute to the discussion about what is known about the Roma of Europe and how (if) Romani migration could change or contribute to what we know about the Roma. In the search to find out who the Roma people are there is a danger of imposing and perpetuating stereotypes. While some have been in search to find the ‘real Roma’, others hold the opinion that everybody knows who the Roma are. In the meanwhile, and as the literature on identity conveys, understanding and perceiving the Roma and their identities necessitates several, different, and various accounts which even though differing are equally true.

In Gilman’s (1985, p.18) view, “... for the non-pathological individual, the stereotype is a momentary copying mechanism, one that can be used and then discarded once anxiety is overcome.” In the case of the Roma and them being often closed group getting ‘to know them’ better is perhaps not such a straightforward task. Fear of the unknown in this sense, can inform a person’s ideas and perceptions of a Roma when there has been no contact whatsoever between the two. Even though general stereotypes and various labels might have been relevant sources of information, they could and should stop informing that person’s perceptions once they have got to know each other better and there is no anxiety anymore. Also, sticking to labels, stereotypes, or essentialised ideas and believing in them prevent people from getting to know the other group. As seen earlier on in this chapter, one

of the dangers when trying to perceive the world around us is to rely on stereotypes and seeing it in a one-sided or dualistic fashion. Referring to “third space” Soja (2007), urged life to be considered in three dimensions – not only historical and social but also spatial. Seeing them as simplifications, Bhabha (1994) argued that stereotypes deny plays of difference while they could be eradicated and rejected by engaging with the Other (Sibley, 1995).

Lee (2004, p.33) applies Foucauldian “archaeology of knowledge” to works of the *Gypsy Lore Society*, today known as *Romani Studies*, revealing practises of knowledge construction that has been influenced by hegemonic discourse. It has been the aim of ‘Gypsylorists’, journalists, writers and artists to discover the ‘true-Romani’, thus, reconstructing stereotypes (Clark, 2004, p.239). While in the 19th century romantics saw the “noble savage” as a ‘true Romani’, rationalists saw them as vagabonds, deprived outcasts or a “useless race” (Clark, 2004, p.239). In their search to define who the Roma/ ‘the Gypsies’ are, some scholars are guilty of imposing an identity on the Roma (Hancock, 2010, cited in Marushiakova, 2012, p.3). This could be exemplified by the way Roma were seen and perceived by policy makers and officials in Italy in 2008. Thus, what people know about Roma can be linked again with perceived stereotypes and labels⁷.

Labels contribute actively to the definition of collective identities, but also express and summarize its structure. Together stereotypes and labels create and define a group of people as a community (Sigona,2003). Donald Kenrick (2004) argued that the behaviour of a small minority (of Roma) can influence how they are seen by the majority. Works of scholars dating from the 20th century, news and portrayals of Roma can be untrustworthy. While with their arrival in Europe in 1400-1450 the Roma “pretended to be refugees while pickpocketing and shoplifting,” this popular portrayal seemed to have prevailed regardless of the thousands of other Romani who

⁷ The Italian approach to Roma people can be equally seen as an example of the analogy between how the Roma are seen and perceived to be. The flow of refugees towards Italy which followed the Kosovo conflict in 1999 was regarded by officials as ‘nomadic.’ As one of the labels which the Roma have is that they are peripatetic people and because it has managed to prevail in the perceptions of Italian authorities regarding the Roma, this has led to the Italian decision to treat the Roma as ‘nomads.’ As a result, this has reflected on the way Roma were positioned and treated in the Italian society. Roma as a result were accommodated into segregated authorized and unauthorized camps in very harsh conditions and lacking basic infrastructure and facilities.

worked as craftsmen and fieldworkers in Central and Eastern Europe (Kenrick. 2004, p.79). Early findings have served as a foundation of the essentialized images of the Roma which seem to have prevailed till nowadays. History can sometimes take various accounts and it has to be carefully considered with time. It is the early records of the Roma and their old images which seem to have prevailed over the years by being repeated and exaggerated (Kenrick, 2004, pp.79-80). In Germany the Roma have been seen as “black and ugly” (Gilsenbach, 1994, p.56, cited in Kenrick, 2004, p.80); in France women were portrayed as “the ugliest and darkest-skinned anyone has seen” (Gilsenbach, 1994, p.69, cited in Kenrick, 2004, p.80). In the 15th century the images of the Roma were of religious refugees, genuine pilgrims, acrobats, traders of horses, and cross border dealers, as well as bogus pilgrims (Kenrick, 2004, p.80-82). Even though in Germany ‘Gypsies’ were perceived as spies for the Turks and regardless of records which noted a small number of petty criminals among Roma, their image of thieves has been able to attract greater popularity than other images at the time.

Yaron Matras (2004) defined the term ‘Gypsies’ into two distinguishable notions so that greater clarity is achieved and contradictions reduced. “Gypsy 1” was seen as a social phenomenon of communities of peripatetics or commercial nomads irrespective of their language; “Gypsy 2”, in contrast, should be regarded as a popular English translation of a set of ethnonyms used by the groups themselves whose language is a form of Romani (Matras, 2004, p.53). Thus, the way we could differentiate between a Roma and non-Roma is their use of language despite its diversity of dialects which would pose no difficulty for linguists to distinguish its dialects. Thus, the Romanies could be clearly ‘defined’ as one ‘united’ group.

Similar to the reasoning above, which regard the Roma as a subset of the peripatetic “Gypsy 1”, Marushiakova and Popov (1997; 2011), make a distinction between Gypsies as perceived in Western Europe on the one hand, and in Central and South-Eastern Europe, on the other. While in the case of the former term ‘Gypsy’ includes a broader range of nomad communities regardless of their ethnic origins and identity, in the latter, Gypsies are seen as clearly defined and distinctive ethnic community, or “inter-group ethnic formation”, whose ancestors had migrated from the Indian sub-

continent to Europe (Marushiakova and Popov, 2010a.).

What we know about the Roma is a question that has been asked widely all across the European continent. While in the West the Roma/Gypsies can be seen by the majority as an exotized Other, being at the centre of interest and research of scholars looking for their 'true Romani,' it is in the opinion of Marushiakova and Popov (2012) that this is not the case in Eastern Europe. The authors argue that in the entire region there is a clear idea of the "Cigani", Cikani", "Cyganie", "Цигани" etc. as a well-defined ethnic community with common origins and thus "everyone knows here who they are" (Marushiakova and Popov, 2012, pp.2-3). In such case, one is born a Roma/Cigan or other commonly known names, one cannot become a Roma, and one remains a Roma for life like their ancestors. This section sought to portray a brief overview about what is known about the 'Gypsies'. The next section will have a look into the notion of Romani Identity.

2.5.4. Romani Identities

The representation of Romani identity for Gheorghe (1997, p. 157), one of "ethnogenesis," includes the self-conscious play with Romani identities – a process in which we must recognise the representations of the artist as much as the scientist and the politician. Identities, as seen earlier, can be constantly challenged and negotiated; they are multiple and negotiated (Gonzalez and Habel-Alan, 1994). The processes of physical displacement and mobilities can further contribute to this elusive nature of identities by the new feelings, ideas and undertakings experienced by a migrant. Will Guy (2001) suggested that it is difficult to talk about Roma as the term Roma could hardly encompass the sub-groups which arise out of their differences. Guy (2001) believed that it is better to talk about Romani people(s) and that Romani identity is not a static phenomenon but the result of their intermingling with the societies they occupy. Moreover, this is being constantly reshaped and reconstructed. When speaking about Romani culture, in a broad sense, it should not be understood as a unique and isolated entity but rather a "response to the nature of the symbiotic relationship between Roma and the wider majority communities..." (Guy, 2001, p.5).

Similarly, for Marushiakova and Popov (2010) the formation and development of the identities of the individual Roma should not be considered as independent from the society in which they live. The various impacts of the macro societies which the Roma happen to occupy, along with their political, economic, ideological factors, shape the overall development of the Roma as a community and the structure of their identities (Marushiakova and Popov, 2010b.). That is why the authors argue that the development of Romani identities and their communities are “irregular, multidimensional, and sometimes controversial” (Marushiakova and Popov, 2010b., p.40). The authors reveal what they have called processes of “segmentation and consolidation” (Marushiakova and Popov, 2004). While segmentation is seen as the process in which a group breaks down into separate subgroups formed either on family/clan, or territory principles, consolidation is the process in which separate groups merge to become one group. As the authors argue, these characteristics have been observed of the Romani communities since their arrival into Europe to this date (Marushiakova and Popov, 2004).

Pnevmatikos et al. (2010) saw Romani identity in three main domains. The first one is what they saw as stable and its challenge and change could be equated to the abandonment of the ethnic identity of the Roma. The early betrothal of children appeared to be an example of such annulus in their study. The second domain which the authors considered in their discussion with ethnic Romani identity includes such aspects to identity whose stability, constancy and emotionality can vary according to the specific needs of the group. The knowledge and practice of Romani language among the Romani appeared to serve as an example of this second annulus. And thirdly, the last domain was seen as the most fluid aspect of identity which was also seen by the authors as non-stable and non-permanent. These were supported by examples of practises and beliefs which Roma members did not come to a consensus regarding the consequences of their abandonment. The place of residence and wearing of traditional costumes have come as examples of this third annulus (Pnevmatikos et al., 2010). Pnevmatikos et al.'s (2010) study is significant as it reveals that ethnic Romani identities are not and cannot be rigid and can be seen as the result of changes in the broader perception of the members in a given society at a particular point in time and history and especially in a contemporary context of a

growingly diversified world.

The current thinking on Roma identity underscores that despite the Roma's heterogeneity there are factors which unite them. Csepeli and Simon (2004, p. 134) cite that Romani is based not on common ancestry or territory but it is determined by the differentiation between Roma and non-Roma. Thus, regardless of some differences between the individual communities, there are links between them at the very least in so far as they might identify themselves as "non Gadge." For Matras (2004), in spite of a history of attempts to generalize about the various aspects of "Gypsy 2," the Roma, and their different variations of culture and social organisation, the only feature which unites them all, regardless of their differences is their language (Matras, 2004, p.54). The Romani was seen as an isolated language and the only Indian language which is spoken exclusively in the European continent (Matras, 2004). Thus, there are considerable boundaries between the Romani and other European languages. In support of his argument, Matras (2004) compared the differences in the practices and/or cultures of other but similar groups such as Indians, Jews or Germans which are to be seen as analogous to the observed differences among Roma (Matras, 2004, p.54).

The authors Christine Walsh and Brigette Krieg (2007) in their work "Roma Identity: Contrasting Constructions" highlighted that the Romani identity is shaped by historical, social, cultural, and situational factors. They found in their research that even though the Romani people could be unified by the fact that they lack a homeland, they may share a similar Romani language, and cultural values, there can be still differences in the perceptions of culture and values within the Romanies themselves. This is thus seen as a reason for their division and distinction (Walsh and Grieg, 2007). Similarly, Hancock (2010) argued that the people who have migrated from India are not the same group of people that we may observe today. In his view, the Romani people, their language and culture have acquired their peculiar form during the Anatolian period (Hancock, 2010, p.22). We can speak about "core direct retention" which consists of generic linguistic and cultural factors which can be traced back to India, evident in all Romani populations to a lesser or greater extent, however, we need to acknowledge that all these have changed and been influenced

by the contacts of the Roma with the other peoples and cultures. It is these contacts which are seen as accountable for the sometimes great differences observed between Romani groups in Europe and around the world (Hancock, 2010, pp.22-23).

As we saw in this section, getting a clear idea about the Roma of Europe and their identities is a challenge which would require linking it with various and sometimes controversial facets, even though there are factors which differentiate the Roma from non-Roma. The next section will concentrate more on the notions which might bring the Roma together.

2.5.4.1. Romanipe

The term Romanipe occupies a key role in this thesis. Also known as Romanipen, Romaniman, Romimo, Cikánství, etc., among different Romani groups, it could be translated to *Romanness* or *Romahood* and it is meant to signify the essence of being Roma or the set of factors, laws, behaviour which define the Roma people. Romanipe, could/ should be considered as all this which could differentiate the Roma from the non-Roma, the Gajjo. It is also seen as maintaining the fundamental norms of Romani way of life and cultural identity. A Roma might be considered a Gajjo if she/he do not have Romanipe and the other way round. Even though it is possible that different ethnic Romani sub-groups can differ in their interpretations and ideas of 'Romanipe' it should be considered as the way Roma feel and understand the way they should behave and conduct their lives. Another important distinction is that regardless of their perceived differences, the Romanies tend to perceive the Gajjo societies as the same and in opposition and different to the non-Roma. Certain Romani groups thus consider all non-Romani as inferior, gullible, dirty, who do not look or act like Roma, do not display Roma material culture and others. Non-Roma are seen by definition as polluted as they are ignorant of the rules of the taboo system (Silverman, 1988).

The term has received some attention in the academic discourse. Authors have used it in a fashion suggesting that there is knowledge about it and it has the potential to be understood and mean something for the Roma themselves. For instance, Eva Davidova (2010) has put it that the Romani people, even though scattered throughout

the world, and regardless of their observed differences, are unified by their ethnicity, common origin, language, culture and the observation of the values of their ethnic identity, and unified with the common feelings to Romanipe. In her much older work with American Gypsies, Silverman (1988), leaning to the term 'Gypsiness,' has managed to show that the Roma there succeeded to preserve their distinct peculiarities contrary to popular beliefs of their assimilation. They were able to preserve their cultural peculiarities by maintaining the invisible boundaries between the Roma and the Gadgo and while maintaining their basic Romani values such as self-employment, mobility, independence, and restrictions of the taboo system (Silverman, 1988).

Romanipe is of interest of this work due to three reasons. First of all, it seeks to get a better understanding about the interpretations of Romanipe – it is eager to discover if the concept of the Other could be expended not only between Roma and non-Roma, but also migrant Roma, non-migrant Roma and also Romani groups belonging to different sub-groups. Secondly, this work is eager to discover if (and how) migration and displacement can result into re-discovering, fortifying, or threatening the concept of 'Romanipe' as felt and evaluated by Roma migrants. And thirdly, it is interested to see if a discussion on 'Romanipe' is possible or redundant as in light with the literature of (Romani) identity, movement and migration and belonging.

2.5.5. The case of Bulgarian Roma and the EU

The puzzle of the so-called European 'Romani community' is not fully complete only by identifying and understanding differences between Romanies in different countries. There are other parts of this puzzle which, even though smaller or harder to find, are equally important and they are to be found within the boundaries of the nation-state. In the section on *Romani identities*, we saw that they are formed and shaped by the specific time, societal and political factors (Marushiakova and Popov, 2010; Guy, 2001; Gheorghe, 1997; Walsh and Krieg, 2007; Hancock, 2010). As a result, Roma can differ between nation-states due to the exposure and intermingling with cultures and policies specific of the various states. Roma can further differ within the boundaries of a single country, as exemplified with the case of Bulgaria. The notion of a nation-state – an entity composed and unified by shared national,

cultural, and political characteristics might prove insufficient when analysing Roma in Bulgaria. Even though “everyone [sic] knows here who they are” (Marushiakova and Popov 2012, pp.2-3), referring to the fact that Roma are easily identified group of people in Eastern Europe, finding out who they really are and their sense of belonging requires a deeper exploration. As Massey (2007) put it, societies and different social groups live and exist in their own, specific and unique environments. Seeing space as multiple and heterogeneous, one allowing multiple voices to exist at the same time and one which can give rise to disruption, Massey’s (2007) contribution can be seen as relevant in this context. Also, feelings of being and belonging, and the availability of ‘culture of migration’ could prove relevant in understanding differences in preferred ways of identification among Roma within a given nation-state. Also, Bauman (2007) conveyed that the binding forces of the nation-state are challenged due to an increasingly globalised world.

Scholars have identified differences between Romani communities on the basis of key classifications such as religion, use of language, Romani dialects, lifestyle, boundaries of endogamy, traditional and professional occupations, time and duration of settlement in their respective countries (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001; Tomova, 2000) These are also the basis for differentiating between the Roma and grouping them into different groups and meta-groups. Their perceived differences can be thus seen as the reason for their internal hierarchical levels and self-appellations. In Bulgaria, as in the rest of Europe, the Roma are generally seen as a single (and homogeneous) community by the majorities and there is rarely sufficient awareness about their different specificities. Tomova (2000, p.259) argued that it is “actually a “community” only as far the rest of the population is concerned, since the intra-group differences are greater than those of the non-Roma.” The Roma themselves, however, seldom share a common sense of belonging towards a single Romani community but rather, what is important is the different subdivisions to which they belong. It is only part of the Roma intelligentsia which is aware of the common and shared integral ethnic features which form an integral Roma ethnic community (Tomova, 2000).

Tomova (2000) has given twenty-one subdivisions of Bulgarian Roma based on their self-identification (see Table 1). Even though it is hard to classify the different dialects, the Roma who speak *Romanes* (the Romani language) are seen to belong to the old Vlax (or South Vlax) dialect group and to be descendants of a big migratory wave from Wallachia and Modavia, who dispersed in the Balkan Peninsula in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001; Romani Language and Linguistics Website, n.d.). Based on their practiced religions, Roma are differentiated between Xoraxane Roma (Muslim Roma) and Dasikane Roma (Orthodox Christian Roma) and there is evidence of both having converted from one religion to another over the course of the years (Tomova, 2000, Marushiakova and Popov, 2001). All these features determine Romani communities' specific sense of identity and belonging. However, according to Marushiakova and Popov (2001), as conditions alter over generations, and due to the adaptable nature of the Roma, such differentiations should be regarded as a snapshot which is relevant at the specific time it has been taken; it is not necessarily true of the past and likely to change in the future.

Table 1. Sub-divisions of Roma based on self-identification (Tomova, 2000, p.260)

	Self Identification	Tradition
1.	Bourgoudzii	woodworking tool makers
2.	Kalaidzhii	tinkers
3.	Koshnichari	basket-makers
4.	Dzambazi	live stock traders
5.	Kovachi	blacksmiths
6.	Kopanari	whittlers
7.	Zhelezari	smiths
8.	Sitari	sieve-makers
9.	Reshetari	coarse sieve-makers
10.	Kasapi	butchers
11.	Brusnari	barbers
12.	Hamali	Hamali
13.	Bakurdzhii	coppersmiths
14.	Stroiteli	Builders
15.	Boyadzii	house-painters
16.	Durvari	woodcutters
17.	Koshari	curriers
18.	Kokalari,	
19.	Djourevtsi	half-breeds
20.	Goli	naked
21.	Gadjali	robbers

2.5.6. Migration of Roma from Bulgaria

The search of labour is one of the reasons for Romani migrations abroad. Contemporary migratory movements of Bulgarian Roma could be seen as characteristic for the Balkan area in which workers go abroad for short periods of time in their searches for extra income, while their families stay at home. This type of seasonal migration is also known as “gurbet” (Slavkova, 2008). Similarly, documents from Ottoman era have listed the Roma as a whole not only as “cigane”

but also as “gurbet” and until 1878 gurbet workers have been migrating to other regions under the control of the Ottoman Empire (Slavkova, 2012). Equally, during the socialist era, both Roma and Bulgarians have been involved in transnational labour travels in other socialist states in Europe such as East Germany, USSR, Libya, Cuba and others. Such migratory patterns have been very limited, however, and have been dependent on the approval and security by the socialist state (Slavkova, 2008).

Another reason for Romani emigration is the search to escape hardships such as racial attacks, violence and discrimination. For Matras (2000) and Sobotka (2003) East-West Romani migration has been a continuous process since the 1950s. With the collapse of communist regimes and opening of borders many Roma from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland saw westward migration as the option for “a new beginning” (Karoly n.d.). The period after 1989 has been considered as a turning point which marked the beginning of a period in which the Roma as a whole have witnessed considerable hardships such as violent attacks, discrimination and considerable fall of living standards in all post-communist states (Reyniers, 1999; cited in Sobotka, 2003). While they used to be employed by the state working in cooperatives, now they found themselves the targets of hate speech, jobless, facing one of the greatest rates of unemployment and poverty, racist attitudes and increased discrimination (Tomova, 2011b-; Karoly, n.d.).

Lifting of borders and eradication of visa requirements with the accession of Bulgaria and Romania into the European Union in 2007 is another impetus for the migration of Romanies from these countries. Now they are free to travel and reside in its Member States and search for better lives. Furthermore, it is not only the freedom of movement within the EU space, but similar to the period after the fall of communist regimes in the region, one of the most powerful ‘push’ factors characterizing the period for countries in the former Eastern bloc is harsh socio-economic situations. A study in 2008 in a town in south-central region of Bulgaria showed that in one-third of the families, even pregnant women, at least one person works abroad in order to provide for their family (Tomova, 2011b). Even though the Roma set off with the intention to return to their home countries after working for some years abroad and once they have managed to save money, most of them have

continued to live abroad while sending a great amount of their earnings back to Bulgaria. Nowadays a lot of Romanies in Bulgaria are convinced that seasonal and temporary labour in EU countries is the best and sole option for the improvement of their economic situations. Surveys in Bulgaria in 2007 showed that over 40 per cent of households in urban areas have at least one member of a family who has worked or is working abroad (Tomova, 2011a).

2.5.7. Romani hybridity, identification and belonging in the EU space

Roma in Bulgaria, similar to Roma from all across the world, often prefer to hide their ethnic identities for one or another reason. In the most recent census in Bulgaria, done in 2011, national statistical experts were surprised to find out that there are fewer people than expected who have identified themselves as Roma (Tomova, 2011a). This could be explained by 1) their unwillingness to reveal their ethnicities due to fears of racism and discrimination, 2) by the number of Roma who have migrated abroad or 3) both.

Bulgarian Roma, as a whole, are seen to follow the general flows of trans-border labour mobility characteristic for the Bulgarian population. The biggest part of them heads towards countries of the Mediterranean – Greece, Spain and Portugal, Cyprus, Italy and France. Part of the Muslim Roma are seen to follow the migratory paths of ethnic Turks towards Holland, Belgium, Germany. Roma from Dobrich (region in eastern Bulgaria) has been doing business for two decades seasonally in markets in Poland. These migrant Roma, as a whole and with few exceptions such as the begging Bulgarian Roma in Bordeaux, are seen by the surrounding population as no different as all Bulgarian migrants (Marushiakova and Popov, 2010).

As it comes to the long term consequences of staying for longer periods abroad, there are several scenarios. For some that there is a danger of the Romani culture, customs and language to be forgotten in the foreign context which might lead to the loss of something authentically Roma. Karoly (n.d) talks about the possibility of high pressures for assimilation due to a clash of different cultural values, loosening of contacts with family members from origin countries, breaking down of family

structures and disintegration of traditions. For others, such as Slavkova (2008, p.43), in her research with Roma migrants in Spain, even though choosing to identify mainly as Bulgarian nationals, there is the possibility of them to feel and act as the Spanish do and when returning home do things “the way the Spanish do it.”

Consequently, this work is eager to discover the birth and manifestation of hybrid Romani communities and the factors which emerge and determine Romani identification in various contexts. Furthermore, it is interested to discover if there are feelings of belonging to a greater European space and if their processes of migration could excite feelings of belonging and unity with other Romani groups – only from Bulgaria but also other Member States.

2.6. Conclusion

As this work seeks to better understand the impacts of contemporary Romani migration on their identities, perceptions, behaviours, customs and Romanipe in the EU context it deemed necessary to explore the concepts of identity, belonging, migration, mobility and displacement, and Roma. Literature shows that these concepts can be evading and perspectives, time, space and location influence and determine their definitions and interpretations.

The Roma of Europe are seen today as a homogeneous group, however, over the history their images and identities have been interpreted in various and sometimes contradictory ways. The study of Romani migration today is relevant due to two reasons – on the one hand, one of the labels of the Roma is that they are a travelling group (even though a very small percentage today have migratory way of life), and on the other hand, tearing down of boundaries and greater freedoms of movement of EU citizens provide a chance to approximately six million Roma in EU to migrate and pursue better havens. The processes of Romani migration in Europe has been historically recorded and evaluated by non-Roma scholars and this work seeks to pursue the comments and evaluations of the Roma themselves and thus bring insider perspectives.

Whether we are living in a greatly globalised world today can be a contested issue and scholars interpret it in various ways. Perceiving 'home' can depend on the availability of "network capital" (Elliot and Urry, 2010, p.11), 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging.' Migrants do not always act in predictable and reasonable ways and decide to base their actions and decisions on certain institutional, cultural, language or ethnic cores even though it might be not in their true interests. In other occasions, they decide to fully merge with the host societies and do and act as the locals do. Migrants have good chance to identify with the host societies and with their origin ones in various occasions.

Romani identification differs not only between countries but also within the boundaries of a nation-state. As Thrift (2007, p.301) hypothesized, spaces is to be seen not as "neutral grids" or "containers" filled with meaning but as the meanings we strive to create; thus, it is hard to interpret the world as we are constantly constructing and reconstructing it with others for numerous reasons. Massey (2007) saw space as a process of interaction and interrelations which allows for differences to exist. Even though interpretations can contradict, they re-inforce and affect each other. This has been the case of Bulgarian Roma and we saw that they can differ according to their occupations, use of language or dialect, religion, way of life, self-appellations and other factors. This can give grounds to perceive themselves as Other not only than the non-Roma but also Roma from different groups. As a result this can lead to various forms of interpreting the concept of 'Romanipe.' Its interpretations can depend, like the concepts of identity and belonging, on the specific time, age and context and this work seeks to find out the shifts of its illustration in migrant Roma from Bulgaria.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to give an overall description of the research design and the methods employed in order to address the aims of this research. The purpose of this study, in a broad sense, is three-fold. Firstly, it seeks to better understand the conception of the Other as an integral part of the identity of the Roma migrant. In particular, it seek to explore how Bulgarian Roma migrants see themselves as Roma and what they see as part of their Romani identities. Is there a boundary between themselves and the Other and how do they engage with the Other? Secondly, this study seeks to find out what migration abroad does to the particular Roma groups under study. How does it change their self-perceptions and their understandings of 'Romanipe'? Thirdly, it seeks to find out the effects of migration on their cultural practices, feelings and sense of belonging.

This study was carried out in Bulgaria. The decision was based on practical reasons, as a citizen of Bulgaria, as well as a Roma, it was determined that it would be easier for the researcher to access the needed information. The research started with a pilot study conducted in the summer of 2012. In the following year, the fieldwork was conducted in the towns of Sofia, Montana and Stara Zagora, which were identified in the pilot study. The most appropriate methods identified and employed, based on the aims of the study, were semi-structured in-depth interviews, where respondents were sourced through the use of gatekeepers. This chapter seeks to explain the rationale for choosing Bulgaria, the towns where the interviews were carried out, as well the chosen research techniques – including their advantages and limitations, how the data was analysed, and the ethical considerations related to this research.

3.2. Pilot study

The data collection for the study took place during the summer of 2013, this was preceded by a pilot study in August of 2012. The pilot study's purpose was to test the

research questions, establish links with key people in the communities and gain experience working in the field. As a result of the pilot study, the researcher was able to interview Romani migrants in Sofia, Montana and Stara Zagora. As Sarantakos (2013) put it, the pilot study is an instrument which acts as a “rehearsal of the main study” (p.266). Thus, after collecting this provisional data, the researcher was able to get a real sense of the appropriateness of the questions (Cargan, 2007), their general responses, study the reactions of interviewees, gain experience of the ways informants could be approached, and establish links with key figures who could act as gatekeepers.

At the end of the pilot study, 18 interviews had been collected– five from Sofia, six from Montana and seven from Stara Zagora. There were 13 males and 7 females while two of the interviews were with married couples. One of the immediate outcomes of conducting this initial study was the building of confidence as a researcher. The researcher was able to become more comfortable and gain assurance in how to approach informants. He became aware of the best ways to introduce himself, explain the purpose of the study and how to stimulate a flowing conversation. Furthermore, he was able to put to the test the research design and see if the gathered material could yield fruitful empirical data. After the initial data was collected, most of the interviews were transcribed and analysed along with the field notes. Thus, common patterns and themes were identified and, as a result, research questions and themes were reframed so that potential ambiguity among informants was eliminated during the main study.

3.3. Research experience

The experience of the research was on the whole positive. As explained later in this chapter, the fact that the researcher was identified as a Roma, as well as due to the role of the gatekeepers, the fieldwork progressed with minimum complications. Even though in the majority of the cases interviewees and the researcher met for the first time, ‘barriers’ were lifted and the researcher was met with hospitality and warmth. In some cases, interviews carried on towards the directions which respondents chose: unexpected themes which interviewees wanted to emphasise regarding their migration experiences and observations. At first, the researcher felt uncomfortable

interrupting respondents in order to steer them to the 'relevant' theme, however, later such seeming diversions were positively appreciated because of the new dynamics they introduced to the research. In a couple of cases, the personal narratives were really touching, even though not directly addressing the research prompts. Both the informant and the researcher exchanged personal feelings and experiences linked with their migration experiences, many of which were deeply moving. Though often unanticipated, this part of the fieldwork was in fact the most enjoyable and memorable.

Certainly, there were instances when the researcher was viewed with mistrust and suspicion, probably because he was an unknown in the mahalas; however, these cases were few. Also, there were occasions when respondents were shy and therefore the researcher had to invite them multiple times before they agreed to partake in this study. There were also others who did not appear at the appointed time and place for interviews. Over time, the researcher gained confidence in approaching prospective informants and explaining the nature of the research as well as conducting interviews.

In the main study in the summer of 2013 there were 66 interviews collected in total - 20 interviews collected from Sofia, 20 from Montana and 26 from Stara Zagora; 33.33% were females, and 66.67% were males; however, gender was not a variable examined in this research. Similarly, age was not a variable examined in this research however the age of the participants typically ranged between 18 and 75 years old.

3.4. Ethical considerations

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.51)

"The awareness of ethical concerns in research is reflected in the growth of relevant literature and in the appearance of regulatory codes of research practice formulated by various agencies and professional bodies. A major ethical dilemma is that which requires researchers to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and their subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research."

In order to strike this balance between the goals of this project and the ethical considerations which might inevitably arise when conducting research, there were

several points which guided this study. First of all, the ethical principles related to this study were given full consideration prior to the fieldwork. This was in line with the aim to avoid any potential negative effects on the informants and the researcher. Thus, this work was approved by the Ethics Committee of Swansea University.

The consent of all informants was explicitly sought before their participation. All respondents were informed about the purpose of this research, as well as their rights and guarantees of anonymity. Consent forms were read and explained before their participation. The question of anonymity is an important one, particularly as it concerns work with migrants. Some of the data gathered from migrants may be sensitive, especially when working with vulnerable populations, who as a result may consider such a study, and the researcher, with a certain degree of suspicion (Barsky, 2009). This research made sure not to raise or ask any sensitive topics such as questions relating to types of employment, ways of earning abroad or immigration status. Therefore, it was explained to the informants several times that they have the freedom to answer, discuss and raise questions and issues as they would best prefer and feel most comfortable to discuss. This was certainly mentioned in the Consent Form and also ensured that there are no right or wrong answers but what this research is really interested to hear is their personal stories.

Another ethical issue concerned who would benefit from this research and whether participation in this study would cause any type of harm to the participants. This could certainly be the case when research is initiated and sponsored by stakeholders such as governments and political and non-governmental organisations that might have a certain agenda and restrictions, which might result in biased or politicised research. This study, however, has been initiated by the researcher himself, whose main aim has been to give greater voice, credibility and recognition, and to act as a way of empowerment for the Roma. The sole funding the researcher has received was from the Roma Educational Fund, which has been for the benefit of the research student in support of his expenses linked with this study. Thus, there were no restrictions and limitations in this study which could compromise the academic freedom of the researcher, as it was free from external pressures to deliver particular results or data.

Any suspicions among participants which might have existed about the researcher were considerably reduced due to two main intertwined reasons. The researcher introduced himself as Roma and when he was in neighbourhoods which he did not belong to, and he was associated with the gatekeepers who could be seen to act as 'guarantors' for the researcher's credibility. Indeed, realisation that the interviewer was a Roma who can understand their language but also a student in a foreign country acted as a form of breaking of barriers between the subjects. It could be felt there were common issues which were being shared by both parties and there was therefore a need to accommodate the researcher in his educational endeavour. The educational purpose of this research further acted as an 'ice-breaker' which encouraged some of the interlocutors to assist and help. The knowledge of language and his Romani heritage acted as great gate-opening factors which resulted in winning of trust among many of the informants, their acceptance of belonging to a similar group and therefore alleviated some of their anxieties concerning taking part in the research.

In relation to the necessary anonymity and confidentiality, all audio recordings have been kept in a secure place, accessible only to the researcher and the point of access is only through the researcher. The researcher had and continues to commit to not distributing or displaying the audio recordings to anyone, as well as not to have the digital recordings for any purpose other than the data analysis. In line with the guarantee of anonymity, when writing up the findings of the fieldwork, the researcher decided to assign numbers to the participants instead of using pseudonyms. Names can sometimes reveal belonging to a certain ethnic or religious group or another and, for that reason, the researcher has opted to use numbers instead of assigning any names. This was encouraged by the need to be as impersonal and impartial as possible and linked with ensuring the respondents' confidentiality and anonymity.

3.4.1. Positionality

The researcher must acknowledge his positionality and the ways he might have influenced the research outcomes. The naturalistic paradigm argues that different people will attach different meanings to the same phenomena and it is important to

understand these differences (Drapper, 2004). Even though there was a certain element of gaining of trust and reducing the difference between the informants and the researcher (due to a shared Roma identity) this should not be considered as a 'guarantee' in any way. Being conscious about shared culture, values, morals or norms, informants might have withheld certain information from the researcher, due to concerns about not being judged or viewed in negative lights. Therefore, it must be recognised here that the shared Romani heritage between the researcher and the informants should not always be equated with 'real stories.' Consequently, even though being 'an insider' could be seen as a great asset, such a position should still be critically assessed and not taken as a guarantee of any kind but as a fluid one instead (Ryan et al., 2011). It is also reasonable to consider the researcher as a "partial insider" (Sherif, 2001, p.436) – or someone who is partially one of a group – due to the fact that the researcher was in very many of the cases from another Bulgarian town, might belong to another Romani group, speaks a different dialect yet could also demonstrate an understanding of their individual experiences as migrants.

The reliance of gatekeepers, even though crucial, may be another limitation of this work. Working with gatekeepers implies that they have the power to determine who will be a participant of this study. Thus, some respondents might agree (or have agreed) to partake in this study because of the gatekeepers while other respondents might have been left out because of the lack of a good relationship between gatekeepers and potential informants (Hoggart et al., 2002). One way to address this was by the personal approach of the researcher to find informants, but also relying on the help of more than one gatekeeper in the target towns.

Finally, as a student who is pursuing his degree in the UK, the researcher was often seen as a source or a channel of power. Many informants sought eagerly to voice the injustices and negative experiences they have been subject to, whether in Bulgaria and/or in the countries to which they migrated. Thus, with their engagement with this study they saw an opportunity to pursue their self-interest. They very often saw this as an opportunity to reach out to those people who are in the higher ranks of power and decision-making (in most cases at the EU level) hoping they would 'hear' and 'understand' the importance of their personal stories. Furthermore, informants saw

the researcher as a 'potential' link and help as a source of credible, educated and first-hand information about some of their rights as migrants, but also as migrants in the UK. Therefore, the researcher was in some cases considered as a source of help for the informants who believed that their stories would be better evaluated by an audience or group of people who would assist them.

3.5. Research Design

3.5.1. Studying Bulgarian Roma

The decision to examine Bulgarian Roma was based on a practical rationale. As a Roma who was born and bred in Sofia, Bulgaria, the researcher could rely and build on the help of close and extended family and relatives. Thus, access to the mahalas (concentrated Romani quarters) in Sofia was easy and natural. According to the latest national census in 2011, the city of Sofia has a total population of 1,291,591 inhabitants, of which 1,056,738 identified their ethnic group as Bulgarian, while 17,550 identified themselves as Roma (Национален статистически институт, 2011).⁸ Also, through the help of kin, the researcher was able to have relatively easy access in Montana – a town in north-western Bulgaria – with a total population of 53,856 inhabitants. The Roma in Montana make up the second largest ethnic group, with 3,055 persons according to the 2011 census, while 38,278 people out of the 41,699 who gave an answer about ethnic belonging identified themselves as Bulgarian (Национален статистически институт, 2011)⁹. In the interests of comparison and balance, the town of Stara Zagora was identified. Stara Zagora is a town situated in south-central Bulgaria with a total population of 160,108 inhabitants. According to the census in 2011, 5,430 persons identified as Roma and 117,963 as Bulgarians (Национален статистически институт, 2011).¹⁰

⁸ 1,096,999 people answered the question about their ethnic belonging, while 6,993 did not.

⁹ 171 did not answer that question.

¹⁰ Out of 126,554 who answered the question about their ethnic belonging; 617 persons did not self-determined themselves.

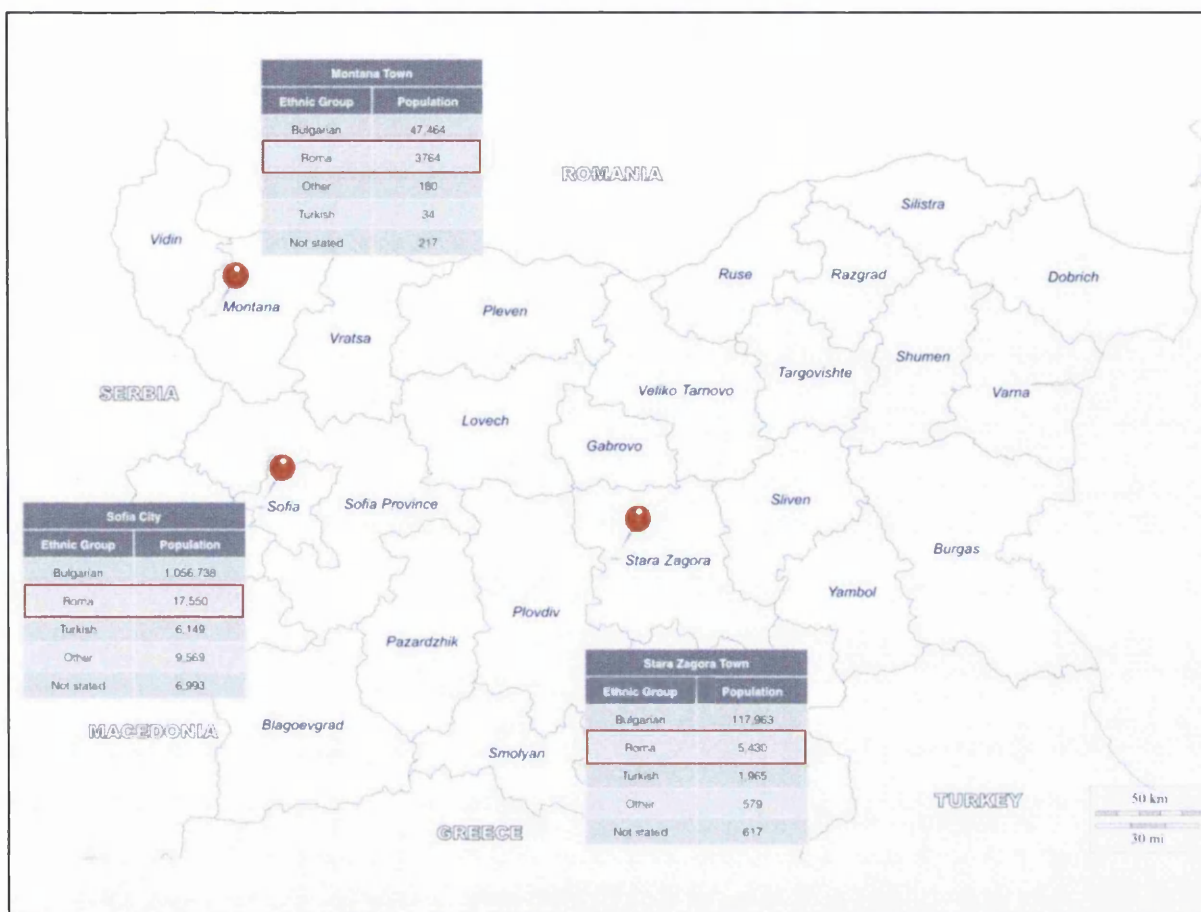


Figure 1: Map of Bulgaria (Dalet, n.d.) with details of ethnicity in the selected towns (Национален статистически институт, 2011)

These three urban areas were selected as they could account for a diversity of Romani respondents, all having a considerable population of Roma, which in turn can account for a broader geographical representation and balance.

3.5.2. Semi-structured interviews

Utilising the snow-ball sampling method, semi-structured interviews were carried out with Romani migrants from the towns of Sofia, Montana and Stara Zagora. The semi-structured qualitative interview was selected as the most appropriate tool as it would enable in-depth interviews (Bernard, 2006) which could bring out the intricate feelings, narratives and experiences of Bulgarian Romani migrants. Semi-structured interviews were also favoured because of the flexibility they offer to the researcher and the respondent (Bernard, 2006, Bryman, 2012). This method allows the researcher to gather the desired data and yet remain unrestricted in cases where unexpected data emerges (O'Leary, 2014). This would give informants a greater

freedom to discuss and address their observations and experiences as migrants. They could address and answer the question at hand in ways they see as most appropriate; they could complement answers with personal examples and other stories and tackle questions through their own angle which, in turn, could suggest and point to further topics which might have not been originally identified by the researcher. As a result, one of the main reasons semi-structured interviews were identified as an adequate method was the flexibility offered.

This method allows for engagement between the interviewer and the informants in a fruitful conversation without the formality and rigidity of a structured interview. Interview themes were pre-determined, though the questions acted as 'interview guides'. Thus, when appropriate it is possible for the interview to take an unpredicted twist and direction which might have not been originally planned. Therefore, new trajectories could be borne by the mere prompting of a question or theme which was being discussed. Further, through semi-structured interviews, the researcher sought to eliminate 'leading questions' but put forward more general questions instead.

The semi-structured interview is also an adequate tool when the encounter between the researcher and the researched is limited to not more than once (Bernard, 2006), as it was recognised that there was no guarantee of further encounters, especially working with migrants. Most of the informants travel to Bulgaria (and their places of origin) at times when they have longer breaks from work. In other cases, there were Roma informants identified who predominantly reside in Bulgaria, however, they were often actively seeking to migrate abroad again and ready and expecting to travel whenever the chance presented to them. Even though after the interview there were contact details which were exchanged between the interviewer and the interviewees, such as e-mails, Skype and telephone numbers, it could not be guaranteed that another opportunity would present itself in the same fashion.

Respondents were provided with two forms which addressed the ethical demands of this research.¹¹ One was the *Consent Form* which was for them to keep and also for

¹¹ See Appendix 1 and 2 respectively for the Consent Form and the Debrief Form

the records of the researcher. It contained information about the study, such as the title and a brief description of its objectives. The *Consent Form* also explained the rights and guarantees of the participants regarding anonymity, and sought their signature as agreement to take part in this study. Informants had the chance to read it themselves, though the researcher also explained their rights as participants and their guarantee of anonymity. It was explicitly sought to make clear to the participants that they should feel free to answer according to their knowledge, that there are no right or wrong answers, they could withdraw from the study at any time they felt like, and that they agreed the information they would give was to be used solely for the purposes of this study. The second document was the *Debrief Form* which thanked the informants for their participation in the study. It contained the contact details of the researcher, such as mobile number, Skype address, university e-mail address and the address the university. The *Debrief Form* also explained that informants could obtain a copy of the audio recording and the final version of this research and it encouraged them to get in touch with any queries, objections or for more information in regard to this study.

In order to promote the informality of the whole study experience, there were small snacks which were made available while the interviews took place. Even though it was explicitly made clear that the participation within this study was wholly voluntary and there would be no financial or monetary benefits for taking part of it, there were snacks and drinks which were shared. This was thought to act as a small gesture of appreciation and in order to lessen the nervousness or the intimidation which might exist among the informants. It has been an ideal that interlocutors feel as comfortable as possible and ignore the formalities which might exist when participating in the study. Also it was thought to restore the balance of power between participants and the researcher by creating a comfortable environment where open discussion can thrive.

3.5.3. Selection of participants

The most important factors which determined partaking in this study was the self-definition/identification of being a migrant and a Roma. As an ethical requirement, informants had to be of minimum age of 18 years old and also willing to share their

experiences. They were current migrants and returned migrants and even though some of the participants were not residing abroad or engaged in any type of physical travel, they still met the definitions of a migrant. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Baudrillard (1989, 1990) argue that a person need not be physically mobile in order for them to be considered migrants. As mentioned in the Literature Review, perspectives play important roles in the ways movement and displacement is perceived. For instance, the act of reading a book can be equally displacing and uprooting to the reader, even though they may be static and not involved in physical travel. Self-perception of being a migrant was therefore one of the key factors which determined whether or not they could be counted as informants for the purposes of this study.

The time which respondents have spent abroad mattered, however, to a certain extent. Initially, the duration of the stay abroad was considered to be a minimum of one year, however, any time spent abroad less than that was still considered as valuable and credible if the respondents identified themselves as migrants. Even a single, even though limited, encounter with migration could be lasting and quite integral to the life of a person, and therefore such individuals were considered as appropriate informants for this study. As mentioned, besides self-identifying themselves as migrants, informants should also self-identify as Roma. It should be noted that the researcher was not able to 'test' the respondents' claims to being Roma (as is perhaps the case for other research studies conducted with the Roma people). The destination abroad of the informant and purposes of their stays abroad were seen as not important. What the researcher required was that interviewees were eager to share their personal stories, that they had something to share and say, and that they considered themselves as migrant Roma.

It was reasoned that the greater the pool of informant profiles collected, the richer the data would be. That was thought to contribute towards and account for a greater diversity of responses and therefore result in deeper and meaningful research results. Therefore, Roma from different places of residence, i.e., mahalas or mixed neighbourhoods, and with different ages, educational status, group attachments, use

of Romani language or not, dialect use, religious affiliation were sought and welcomed to partake in this study.

This study did not seek to address differences between genders and as such this variable was not considered as an emphasis in the study, even though gender of the informants was noted. In the main study the aim has been to collect data from 20 informants from each studied town. Since there was no guaranteed way to ensure participants would partake, nor was there a selection process in order to ensure a balance between males and females, gender balance or gender specific perspectives were not recognised as a major issue to the study.

3.5.4. Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers ensured the recruitment of many of the participants in this study. Gatekeepers are normally people who are in close contact with those identified as a target group and “enjoy a certain respect among them” because of their role (Bilger and van Liempt, 2009, p.125). In Sofia, the researcher was predominantly able to find informants himself, while in the towns of Montana and Stara Zagora there were individuals who acted as gatekeepers. On the one hand, having an insider figure proved to be a vital resource as the researcher was a new-comer who was unknown to the local Romani population. With a person from their own communities, trust was easily won among the local informants from Montana and Stara Zagora and they were eager and curious to find out about the purpose of the study. Thus, through word of mouth through the snow-balling technique, informants were relatively easily found and interviewed.

On the other hand, the role of the gatekeeper could be seen as a possible limitation. The researcher was aware that migrants who were not in a good relationship with the gatekeepers were left out. The researcher was aware that once in the mahalas, and introduced and being with someone from the locals, the local Romani population associated him with his companion or gatekeeper. This in turn could be regarded as a potential deterrent when the researcher decided to contact them independently. Likewise, the gatekeepers could only introduce and refer people who they would like to meet and were in good and friendly relationships with and also those who thought would fit the purpose of this study (Bilger and van Liempt, 2009). One way the

researcher tried to avoid this was to make friends and seek the help of different insiders (or gatekeepers). That was the case in Montana and Stara Zagora where the researcher was able to seek the help of three different insiders. This turned out to be of great benefit, especially as the mahala in Stara Zagora is of greater size compared to the Romani community in Montana. Also, because of this limitation, it was important that the researcher sought to find research participants on his own.

3.5.5. Field location

Interviews were carried out at places which were perceived as comfortable for the informants and that enabled them to have a quiet and peaceful conversation. Interviews were done through two main means – face-to-face and via Skype. While only three interviews were done via Skype, they went well as we were able to see and hear each other clearly, and even though there was no physical presence, reviews showed that there was no suggestion that the qualities of the interviews were less good than those face-to-face. All other interviews, then, were conducted face-to-face in the homes of informants or outside in cafés in as relaxed environments as it could possible be.

3.5.6. How the data were recorded and saved

The interviews were digitally audio recorded. It was essential, however, that the role of the voice recorder was downplayed in order to ease any nervousness which might arise from the thought of being recorded. It was explained several times to the participants that the recording was solely for the purpose to act as an aid to remember the conversation. Thus, the recorder was only turned on when it was felt that the flow of the conversation was free from tension and anxiety on the part of the interviewee. A phrase which was commonly used was: *“We are having a great conversation, would you mind if I turn the recorder on? Please, ignore it thoroughly – it is only to help me recall our good conversation...”* When turned on at the beginning of the interview, it was made clear that interviewees should not pay attention to it and that the recording device was only a way to recall information. Nevertheless, consent for being audio recorded was explicitly sought prior to the actual interview. It was also explained that the collected data would be anonymised in order to ensure their

privacy and protect their identities, while the sole person with access to it would be the researcher himself.¹²

A note-book was also used, with field-notes taken about the interview experience. Usually, the notes were written in comfort at the end of the day, while the information and observations about the respondents resonated freshly in the memory of the researcher. The notes included general observations and contact details (phone number, e-mail address and Skype – whenever applicable) for further and future contact in case of further enquiries. Field notes were primarily in order to complement the audio recording and also replace it, in case of accident or loss. These notes were valuable as they contained not only contact information and personal observations but also quotes and narratives which were thought to be useful for this study.

The language of the interviews was primarily Bulgarian. At certain points, where the use of Roma language was considered more appropriate in order for informants to feel a greater freedom of choice of expression, there was code switching. This was most often when interviewees were asked about their interpretations of the word ‘Romanipe’ and questions related to their feelings as Roma, or the descriptions of their Romani identities. In this way informants were able to choose which language to utilise and have greater freedom of expression. The use of the Romani language was encouraged as this was thought to give greater depth to the empirical analysis.

In respect and in accordance with the guarantee of anonymity photos were not taken. It was reasoned that both photos of persons should not be featured nor photos of the local areas such as their (or surrounding) houses. Furthermore, it was reasoned that it has been the stories, narratives and the shared experiences of the individuals which was thought to contribute to the greater insights of this study rather than any other forms of ‘representation’.

¹² There was one case when the batteries of the audio recorder died, so the researcher took notes while the conversation took place. On another occasion, a cell-phone was used as a back-up and alternative device when the audio recorder ran out of batteries.

3.6. Data analysis

This research is based on qualitative data. It was of utmost interest for the researcher to find out the individual stories of the informants and each opinion has been regarded as valuable and noteworthy. Comprising 66 interviews, the amount of qualitative data was relatively large, however, and its analysis could be seen to pose a challenge.

All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher himself. The transcription process of the main study took more than four months. Even though all the interviews were in Bulgarian (with certain parts in Romanes) they were transcribed into English. The rationale for all of the data to be translated into English has been practical. First of all, since this thesis is being written in English, it was reasoned that all the qualitative data should be in that language too. This would seek to produce a good flow in the writing process and would also ensure that there is less time spent translating the data while using it in the body of the text. Secondly, qualitative research tools such as NVivo are primarily designed for the English language and having another language, such as Bulgarian, would drastically decrease the tools which could be used in the software programme.

Whilst laborious, transcription and translation of the data was of great benefit for the researcher and in mastering the data. Both translating and transcribing the collected interviews helped the researcher a great deal to personalise and become immersed in the collected data. Therefore, it proved to be much more than just a transcription process – it involved not only transcribing the interviews but also paying close and constant attention to the best possible way to translate them. The fact that it has been the same person who has done the interviews and observed and experienced the interaction with the subjects of this study guarantees a close and fair translation and interpretation of the data. In cases when the Romani language was used during the interview, this was noted in square brackets. Even though most of the data was translated into English, there are expressions which were retained in the original language and put in square brackets, as their translation could pose a risk of misreading and misinterpreting of the original meaning. Therefore, there were two cases when clear indicators were noted in the body of the transcribed texts – in cases

when there were questions and answers used in the Romani language and at those times when the English translation would stray from the original meaning of the narrative. Therefore, the original words or phrases in (both Bulgarian and/or Romanes) were put in square brackets. All this was done for the purpose of conveying a close meaning of the transcribed interviews to the best abilities of the researcher.

3.6.1. Use of NVivo software

After compiling all the interviews, the data was analysed with the help of the software tool NVivo. The use of Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), such as NVivo, has grown and has been adapted to meet the demands of qualitative, mixed-methods, research involving multimedia and when teams work together in qualitative research projects. In an age of incessant technological advancements, NVivo has become more flexible and that has come with increased complexity (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Some are not convinced of the necessity for such technological tools. These critics often cite the following four reasons: such software tools distance the researcher from their data (as the computer is seen as a mediatory factor which stands between the researcher and the data), they may exclude other analytic activities (because of the dominance of code-and-retrieve-methods), they will mechanise the analysis (which may be more typical of or similar to 'positivist' or quantitative research) and that PCs are suitable with the grounded theory methodology (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Yet others welcome the use of computer assisted software as it is specifically developed to assist the researcher and help them in the handling, systematic organisation, management and the analysis of large amounts of data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Even though the researcher had never come across NVivo before, after a week of reading and following the online and various Youtube tutorials, he was able to get invaluable knowledge and experience with the programme. Thus, the initial feelings of intimidation about using another 'complicated software tool' started to diminish as the researcher began using it.

Making sense of the more than 60 interviews would not have been at all easy without the NVivo software programme. It proved to be extremely helpful as it facilitated

logical and understandable (re)organising of the interviews, such as the creation of thematic codes, along with its many options for the visual representation of the results of the data. As Fielding and Lee (1998, p.63) put it, “[i]f data are manageable, the potential for confusion and muddle is reduced. So too is the temptation to over-rely on the exotic, the near at hand or voluble. However, the explicit, systematic and documented management of data also helps to avoid over-interpretation.” Nvivo proved to be a tool which helped a great deal to organise, access and retrieve the gathered field material in a quick and simple, user-friendly and easily accessible fashion; thematic nodes became visible, quickly created and edited, and taken together because of its features it proved to be a helpful analytical tool indeed.

Further, NVivo proved beneficial in managing the data without having large amounts of paper to print and deal with. This has drastically decreased the risk of data loss and confusion. The conceptual work, nevertheless, was entirely up to the researcher as he had to make sense of the data, create codes (or nodes as they are called in the software) and analyse the data. NVivo does not purport to be a replacement for the researcher, but it did live up to its promises as a useful data management source.

3.6.2. Coding

As already noted, all of the transcribed interviews were coded with the help of the NVivo software. Coding is the process by which data are thematically grouped and in a systematic manner. Common themes from the gathered data were sought, picked up and put together under unifying codes. The research data was grouped with flexibility (openly) which gave the researcher a chance to group and re-group the codes more than once. All the codes were then coded axially related with the existing concepts in order to confirm that concepts and codes were related and later examined.

A very useful way which helped the researcher a great deal in the overall coding process was the creation of mind-maps based on the literature review and the concepts which have emerged from there. The mind-maps were created again

through the help of a free soft-ware – iMindMap¹³ (see Appendix 3). This tool was highly effective with its user-friendly interface, colour and great visual representation which has helped in gaining a greater clarity regarding existing theories and concepts. These clear mind-maps were thus used as aids in the creation of codes/nodes in the NVivo software and that enabled the links to existing concepts with the empirical findings and themes.

This process of linking between coded text and the concepts, which was introduced in the Literature Review, was used in the empirical analysis for this work. The empirical analysis was thus often presented in the forms of direct references to quotes from the research participants. The use of direct quotes to support arguments sought to give a greater effect regarding the things they have said, the ways they have expressed themselves and in order to give the informants credibility and also avoid bias.

3.7. Limitations

As with any research there are several limitations with the present study which are beyond the control of the researcher. First of all, this research is not ‘representative.’ It does not claim to cover all experiences and it is limited to specific geographical locations. It deals with Romani communities and individuals from three towns in Bulgaria (Sofia, Montana and Stara Zagora) and does not claim that it is in any way a representative case of the Bulgarian Roma population, nor even of the Roma within these three towns. As qualitative research, it has been the individual narratives which this research sought to flesh out, rather than yield a nation-wide, country-specific, or community-specific ‘representation.’ Furthermore, the idea of ‘representation’ is a debated issue and this is detailed in Chapter 8 *Discussion and Conclusion*. This work maintains that it is hard to talk about ‘genuine’ ‘representation’ of the Roma and cannot claim this. Rather, it is the personal stories which have been sought to be captured in order to better understand the colourful and individual experiences of certain migrant Roma.

¹³ <http://thinkbuzan.com/products/imindmap/>

This research was inevitably influenced and limited by time and resources. As a self-funded student on a partial scholarship, which was provided by the Roma Education Fund (REF) for the duration of three years, the researcher had to ensure he finishes in the prescribed timeframe and not prolong his studies. There were considerable periods which were spent to apply for the REF funding during the first three years. Certainly, all this has taken time from the researcher and has resulted in distraction from his research. Availability of finances has proved to be crucial for the successful and uninterrupted studies of the researcher.

The limited available resources have also determined the limits and the scope of this research. As mentioned already, one of the major decisions which determined the geographical scope of this research has been the ease of access to informants which would result in efficient collection of data. Certainly, this study would benefit if there was a greater opportunity to follow up the migrants to their places of destination: there, further examples could be given and other narratives promoted among the respondents themselves. Also, it would be interesting to continue this work with Bulgarian Romani migrants over time so that it could gain a longitudinal angle. Furthermore, it would be equally poignant to expand on this research by examining the narratives and experiences of Roma from other parts of Bulgaria which would thus result in a greater comparative dimension.

Also, as mentioned in the Positionality section earlier in this chapter, the role of gatekeepers proved to be immense, though it might have also been limiting. Their place of power might have influenced who took part as a participant and who was left out. This is an inevitability when relying on a gatekeeper, however, the researcher worked with several gatekeepers and also tried to approach respondents independently.

Conducting interviews in the open air has limitations. Often, informants were not totally alone and were possibly mindful that others could overhear their conversation. This, as a result might have influenced the ways and sincerity of their responses and opinions. It was not rare that people who were not partaking in the study but were listening to the conversation joined in with their perspective (as migrants) or

commented on some of their shared experiences. Also, there were curious people (encouraged by the novel presence of the researcher) who wanted to find out all about the meeting. All such interferences could have influenced the narratives (or certain parts of the narratives) of the informants. Yet, this was another limitation hard to avoid or eliminate.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has explained the practical elements affecting this PhD study. It began with a section on the Pilot study which was conducted in the summer of 2012. This was an essential stage in the research because it enabled the researcher to identify and establish contacts and gatekeepers, pinpoint areas of population which were going to be studied, and test the initial research design on the ground. Since this was the first official field-work, the researcher gained valuable experience, confidence and also feedback about the feasibility of the research design and questions. The research experience section sought to give an overview of the whole research experience as a whole. It expressed that the fieldwork has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience for the researcher. This has been especially due to the shared Romani heritage between the researcher and the researched. In most cases, the researcher was received warmly and hospitably, receiving sincere and touching stories and as a result gained invaluable experience conducting field research.

As with most research, there are ethical concerns linked with this work. This work has been granted approval by the Ethics Committee of Swansea University and the researcher did his best to respect the individuals who agreed to partake in this research. Thus, during the interviews sensitive topics were not raised, participants' consent was sought prior to the interview and all the gathered data was stored securely so that it became accessible only to the researcher.

Semi-structured interviews have been argued as an appropriate tool which gave an in-depth angle which was sought by this research. This method is especially applicable as it offers a great deal of flexibility to both the researcher and the researched and allows for new data to emerge. Semi-structured interviews account for the greater freedom of expression, and informants are in a position to decide how

to address a topic. This method was also preferred because there was no guarantee that respondents could be reached more than once.

Gatekeepers proved essential for the gathering of data. On the one hand, they helped immensely when the researcher was a new figure in the Romani neighbourhoods. Thus, gatekeepers helped diminish any mistrust and suspicion about the researcher. On the other hand, a recognised limitation to having gatekeepers was their ability to determine who would 'fit' the aims of this study and therefore their recruitment. This drawback was addressed by the researcher's recruitment of several gatekeepers and also by his independent approach to finding research participants through the snow-ball technique.

The analysis of the data was done with the help of computer software NVivo which offered the opportunity to gain a good structure and clarity for the analysis of the gathered data. The final points discussed in this chapter concerned the limitations of this work, and sought to highlight all the issues which could be seen as weakening and limiting the outcomes of this study.

This work does not claim to be 'representative' – it is limited to the study of selected individuals from the Bulgarian capital city, Sofia (situated in the west), the smaller north-western town Montana and Stara Zagora, a middle sized town situated in the geographical south and centre of Bulgaria. There are limitations to this work linked with the fact that the researcher is a 'partial insider' (a migrant and a Roma himself) which could influence participants' responses. Their responses might have also been influenced by the awareness that others might overhear the interview while this took place in the open air. As future research, it would be curious to expand on this study by giving it comparative and/or longitudinal aspects.

Chapter 4 Migration

4.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to set the general scene and tone of discussion about the migration of Bulgarian Roma from Sofia, Montana and Stara Zagora. It thus seeks to start the discussion by analysing the types of Romani migration, the reasons for and the effects of their travels abroad.

As we saw in the literature review, migration can take various forms and shapes. On the one hand, bodies can physically relocate in space. This could be seen as a traditional view of migration, where migrants move or relocate from one place to another for various purposes. On the other hand, migration can be also linked with displacement and mobilities and so it can be also conceptual and imaginative. The latter type of migration is harder to record or notice as it is less readily perceived and observed. This section will attempt to explore the migratory patterns of Bulgarian Roma and shed some light on their migratory types.

Romani migration has been witnessing an increasing and considerable attention in the past decade and it occupies a central focal point in current political debates in most of the Member States of the European Union. There is a pool of literature and numerous reports discussing the reasons for and challenges brought about by the migrations of Roma in the EU. In most of these cases, they describe the ‘push and pull’ factors of Romani migrations, the profile(s) of the migrants and the economic and political implications (including discrimination, integration and inclusion) stemming from these processes (Cherkezova and Tomova, 2013; Cahn and Guild, 2008, 2010; Piemontese et al., 2013; Sigona, 2010; Slavkova, 2012 to list but a few).

When talking about Romani migrations from Bulgaria, the literature suggests that they do not differ much from the generally observed migratory patterns of Bulgarians. Roma from Bulgaria are certainly a part of the general population and

citizens of this country. Thus, their decisions and types of migration do not differ drastically from the decisions for migration of other Bulgarians (Marushiakova and Popov, 2013; Cherkezova and Tomova, 2013; Belcheva 2011, cited in Marushiakova and Popov, 2013, p.256).

4.2. Types of migration

Since definitions have to come first, and if we are to characterise the types of migration of the Bulgarian Roma informants of this study, then it should be said that they could be divided into two main types - physical and imaginative. What this chapter would like to argue, however, is that to frame or to give a definition of the type of Romani migration can be problematic. It will therefore try to show that these migratory types change and can merge from one to the other or encourage one another. For example, the act of physical travel of a Romani would very often result in her continued state of being a 'traveller', even after she has settled down in a certain place and is not involved in physical relocation anymore. This is often the case because of the personal experiences and observations which they experience due to their physical travels abroad. Travelling abroad often opens the door for many Romani migrants to see, learn, observe and get used to other and new ways of life and experiences. This in turn uproots them and makes them realise that there is more to life, which urges many Roma to travel, this time imaginatively, by recalling their personal memories and experiences.

This section will therefore start by highlighting the main types of migration which were observed by the informants of this study. It will start by examining the physical aspects, such as seasonal (or "gurbet") and the rhizomatic types of migration. It will then carry on the analysis by going through the imaginative type of migration by highlighting the psychological and emotional sides of their travels, which leads to ways of 'simultaneity'.

Nevertheless, this work contends that labels should not be treated as exclusive and absolute. It would like to emphasise that the types of Romani migration which are to be described in this chapter should be considered as elastic and fluid and is unable to offer a full explanation of the typology of the migration of Bulgarian Roma

informants. To further illustrate this point, let us start with the seasonal or 'gurbet' type of migration.

4.2.1. Seasonal or 'gurbet' migration

Bulgarian Roma, not unlike the citizens of other countries of Southeast Europe, have been involved in seasonal work abroad. Such processes are characterised by various types of work such as agriculture, harvesting fruits and vegetables, work in certain sectors of tourism and other types which would require workforce during a particular season, or over a period of time. Seasonal work has been further known as 'gurbet' work. Gurbet work is characterised as a process in which a member of a family goes abroad for a particular period in their search for extra income. Historical records in the Balkans relate about 'gurbet workers' (гурбетчи) who used to leave their home countries and their families (for a certain period of time) to go abroad for the purpose of work and extra income. Roma in the Balkans have been involved in this type of temporary emigration for a long time. Registers from the Ottoman Empire has recorded the Romani groups as "kuptu" („кѹптъ“) or "chengene" („ченгене“) as well as gurbet workers (Marushiakova Popov, 2012, p.276). Thus, gurbet workers were observed and characteristic for the Ottoman period and gurbet has been applied to various groups of people, irrespective of their ethnic origins or the type of work done.

The word gurbet traces its roots from Arabic. It means to be 'abroad, or far away from your home or native place' and has such variants as Gharib, Gharibe, or Ghorbat. Informative enough, 'gurbat' in Urdu is translated as "poverty, poor, hardship, famine, having below the acceptable standard of means to live off" (Answers, n.d.).

The idea therefore of travelling abroad for a certain period is not new in the Balkan region and for Bulgarians – both non-Roma and Roma. Even though it used to be more popular to refer to gurbet work before, today this term is less popular and not readily used to describe the processes of temporary emigration for the sake of securing extra income. Probably the most informative points here are that when referring to gurbet or seasonal work, migrants go abroad, leaving their families

behind, for a given time (or season) while they performed their duties away from their homeland. The principal idea is that workers migrate abroad with the purpose to earn and save while they intend to spend their earnings in their home places.

4.2.2. 'Gurbet' vs. 'skilled' labourers

Considering the Urdu association of gharib with poverty, hardship and living below acceptable standards of living, gurbet workers today have been popularly associated with unskilled labourers – in contrast to the skilled labourers abroad. In this way, gurbet workers are seen to be greater in number in the foreign country, which makes them more visible abroad. Slavkova (2013, p.209), who has studied gurbet workers in Portugal, argues that professional and qualified workers tend to distance themselves from their unskilled compatriots and do not consider themselves as migrants. For these 'specialists' or qualified workers, the gurbet workers are those who have arrived in the country "as emigrants", often relying on their own networks, which would suggest they have arrived in the host country as illegals willing to do any work, regardless of the pay rate (Ibid). Even though one the intentions of professional workers abroad may be also greater professional realisation in their areas of expertise, gurbet workers, even though they can be well educated and go abroad for the purpose of any paid job. What unites both unskilled (gurbet) and skilled labourers abroad, nevertheless, is the shared aim to earn money and the economic characteristic of their migration.

Even though the distinction between qualified migrant professionals and unskilled gurbet workers abroad is not entirely satisfactory, it will be used, as it has been used in Slavkova's (2013) work to demarcate between the two groups. The Romani informants of this study fall into both categories as there were examples of skilled professionals and unskilled workers who have gone abroad. What these two groups share in common is the fact that they have left their places of origin in their search for extra income, with the initial idea to return.

It appeared from the empirical analysis that a gurbet migrant would often set off on a journey abroad in pursuit of their profession or to do any paid job in order to save up money and return and spend it in Bulgaria. This type of migration could be thus seen as seasonal or temporary. As it turned out, such temporary migration can easily turn

into permanent emigration, where the idea would be for the whole family to live together abroad and spend longer periods there. This is duly recognised once the potential which other places offer is realised, given the opportunities they offer and the lives they could have abroad. Also, as demonstrated by the findings, a professional worker abroad can change their form and become 'unskilled' just so long as they are able to earn.

There were a few cases emerging from this research which have pointed towards the existence of Roma from Bulgaria who have gone abroad as professional workers before the collapse of the Communist regime in 1989. At that time, they managed to go abroad as labourers whose skills were well appreciated by their employers. It was solely due to their skills that they were not only allowed but able to stay abroad and practice in their professions.

Informants have shared their opinions and experience and commended the importance of being good at their professions. Were they not able to perform to high standards, they would not have been able to stay abroad but would have had to return to Bulgaria. As a result of their proven skills as professionals, they have been appreciated for their work, being given the chance to remain working abroad, receive recommendations and more importantly get respectable salaries.

“ Germany every worker needs to pass an exam. Only I passed the exam... If you want to prosper abroad you need to be absolute master in your profession so that you can be appreciated and in order for them [the Germans] to recognize you and respect you.” (Informant 24, male, 70s Sofia)

Informant 24 has realised the importance of lifelong learning. He stated he has been doing his best to stay up to date in his field by keeping a keen eye on new technologies and innovations and constantly learning new aspects. Thus, he has been doing his best to educate himself, to prepare for and to take exams in order to be competitive in his professional area. “That is the reason the door was open everywhere I wanted to go.” (Respondent 24, male, 70s, Fakulteta, Sofia)

Professional qualifications have been central to the reasons enabling travel abroad for Informant 62 from Stara Zagora as well. Thus, he has been able to travel to Russia, Former Yugoslavia and Germany to exercise his profession as a welder and assembler.

“When the patron [the boss] saw how work started, he gathered [all the workers] and said ‘some people will go back to Bulgaria’ (laughing). And half of them left. One group from Plovdiv left. [...] I formed a team of 4-5 persons to work on the front part. We were working on a garage for NATO’s planes.”
(Informant 62, male, 60s, Stara Zagora)

Informant 62 has similarly come to realise that he ought to be in the best shape possible if he wants to work in his profession as a welder and assembler on construction sites abroad. Similar to the example of Respondent 24 from Sofia, he emphasised his professional abilities and striving for excellence and compared these standards to those of his Bulgarian counterparts. While Informant 24 sees them as “cheats”, regardless of the places they go to and unable to do their jobs well, Informant 62 has stressed that it has been his abilities which have granted him trust and appreciation in his workplace, regardless of his Romani heritage and skin colour. In the same way, Informant 62 was able to receive good recommendations and praise from his employers which have allowed him to be abroad and work in his profession. “I simply got a name in this firm [...] and I won a great trust there.” (Informant 62, male, 60s, Stara Zagora)

By proving their professional abilities and competitiveness, both Informants 24 and 62 have won the trust of their employers, which enabled them to continue being employed and also recommended to other employers as praiseworthy workers. Being a skilled professional, however, does not mean that the migrant would seek realisation only in their area of expertise. Informant 62 from Stara Zagora demonstrated that he would not be intimidated to take up any job, so long as it pays him well. While in Former Yugoslavia, Russia and Germany he was able to work as a professional welder on construction sites, while in Portugal, France and Switzerland he has worked other jobs which were non-related to his professional qualifications. What is informative in this analysis is that the type of migration can merge from one to another and would hardly stay the same.

“In Switzerland I was (working) in the morning till noon. We were looking after horses –racing horses – cleaning the boxes, combing the horses, taking them out in the park and taking them in. These are the horses of customers. The salary is good. The patron [boss] is good, he is understanding. If I work for ten minutes after the working time, they pay you overtime. Just ten minutes and they pay you. Everything is correct and fair.” (Informant 62, male, 60s, Stara Zagora)

Thus, from a professional high-skilled worker, a migrant can turn into a low-skilled ‘gurbet’ worker. There have been points in time when the migration has been done by one individual with the clear intention to stay abroad while saving their earnings. The saved money would be sent to their family members in Bulgaria and invested in businesses, and used in their lives such as remodelling their houses. In other periods of their lives as workers abroad, they have been re-united with their families abroad with a clear intention to stay there long-term. Again, this is an indication which points to the possibility of seasonal or temporary migration to turn into permanent.

4.2.3. Yearly seasonal migration

The availability of work abroad has determined travel abroad for the majority of the Romani interlocutors. Whether they have been skilled or unskilled labourers abroad, the duration of their stay had depended on the availability of jobs and the length of time spent. Often, informants spoke about the seasonal work which they did in places such as Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal and these were often related with agricultural work and jobs in the service sector, such as tourism. These types of jobs and migration can be clearly characterised as seasonal as they depend on the work available abroad. Seasonal migration can be furthermore likened with the time of the year.

Migration abroad offers not only prospects to earn money and save but also it appears to be a space which offers greater comfort and well-being. The migration of Roma could be characterised as seasonal not only in order to earn money in a certain period or season but also due to their intention to spend the winter in a warmer and more comfortable place. Family 56 is originally from one of the Romani mahalas¹⁴ in

¹⁴ *Mahala* is a Balkan word for ‘neighbourhood’ or ‘quarter’. It is how most of the Romani neighbourhoods are called in Bulgarian language. Plural form *mahalas*

Stara Zagora and has been residing in Spain for a number of years. Their migratory pattern has been determined not only by the working season, but also the seasons of the year. They prefer to be in Spain in the winter season in order to escape the often unbearable harsh weather in Bulgaria, regardless of the seasonal work which they do in Spain. While they prefer their home environment and the house in their Romani neighbourhood of Stara Zagora, they prefer to spend the winter season in hot and pleasant southern Spain.

“Say, we come back in the summer – June, July and August and towards the end of September we come back. That is how we do it. We come back in the summer, not in the winter. We talk about the winter because here you will have to have wood and other resources; also, in the winter finding jobs [in Bulgaria] is harder... [but] where I am, there is no cold, there is no winter, and I really don't like the winter. That is why I like it better [in Spain] because there is no winter there... that is why most of the people go abroad in the winter. It is not only me but many people do this.” (Informant 56, male, 30s-40s, St Zagora)

As the narrative of Informant 56 suggests very clearly, the winter in the mahala of his native Stara Zagora is a period of time which is associated with hardship, cold and difficulties. These difficulties are associated with the decreased likelihood of finding jobs in Bulgaria coupled with the higher bills for electricity and wood in order to keep their houses warm enough.

To further illustrate this argument, the following quote is of Informant 65 who is in his 20s and from the mahala in Stara Zagora. Since he has got members of family who reside in Spain and Poland he has the option to choose where to go. Even though Poland's winters could be much colder and harsher than these in meeker Stara Zagora, Warsaw in the winter is still a space which is more preferred for Informant 65.

“The Polish are more winter people, they love to drink – they are party people. I can tell you that I was having great fun. I would go either to my father in Spain or to my brother in Poland. My father has been in Spain for 7-8 years [and] he does not plan to come back. He is often with my mother, though my mother is constantly living as a tourist [travelling between Bulgaria and Spain]. She comes and goes; once the [working] season is over she comes back [to Bulgaria] [...] That is in Spain. My brother is in Poland. He is with the trade – clothes, luggage, this and that.” (Respondent 65, male, 20s, Lozenec, Stara Zagora)

The example which the young Informant 65 brings is a quite informative one in our analysis of the types of migration which could be observed among the Romani informants for this study. It shows that it would be hard to describe in simple terms the migratory characteristics of the family as a whole. It also shows the dynamics within a single family of four which unites and separates at different times of the year. On the one hand, the father of the family spends the majority of his time in Spain. Also, another 'constant' is the older brother of Informant 65 who deals with trade in Poland for most of his time. On the other hand, the mother is described as a "tourist" who travels to Spain for the working season and returns to her native home once it is over. The informative part of this narrative is that the seasonal migration of Informant 65 is also linked with the time of the year – or a search for a place which would accommodate him appropriately during the summer. Facing two viable options ahead of him, Respondent 65 has the options to migrate to a warmer Spain to his father or the much colder Warsaw to join his brother. Even though Poland offers harsher weather in the winter, it is yet a more preferred place due to the fact that with the payment of rent, and their abilities to pay their bills due to their earnings abroad, they could still be in the comfort of a warm house with warm running water.

Even though Bulgaria appears to have remained as the place where the majority of informants identified as the place they belong to, one of the major 'push' factors has been their inability to earn enough money or have a stable job. These facts have been very often automatically associated with the winter periods – periods of discomfort and anxiety. Often respondents referred to the winter in their native places in Bulgaria as being harsh, characterised with hardships and misery. Informant 33 from Montana, who has been living with his family in the Netherlands for eight years relates about the months of the winter:

"I miss my motherland, I miss my friends and the mahala where I grew up... I miss talking. I miss it. However, if I stay here and carry on spending the winter here without working that would mean that I will start digging the garbage in the spring – looking for food." (Respondent 33, male, 50s, Montana)

As a result of their inability to provide for themselves and have regular jobs with a constant income, which would allow them to afford a comfortable living in their native Bulgaria, for many the prospect of a return to Bulgaria becomes unreasonable.

Respondent 51, who is in his 20s, also talks about the winter in Bulgaria. Reflecting on his past experiences makes him and his family less eager to return to their native Stara Zagora, even though he would prefer to be in Bulgaria.

Talking about his parents, Informant 51 says:

“They are thinking [to come back and live in Bulgaria]. However... I don’t know [with a sceptical tone]. At the moment I think that would not be possible. The winter in Bulgaria is harsh. While I was there with each and every time I came back for a short time things were worse and worse off.” (Respondent 51, male, mid 20s, Stara Zagora)

This section sought to support the idea that migration abroad can be a reaction not only to the situation of general unemployment and highly restricted availability of resources in Bulgaria, but also a reaction to the weather conditions. Surely, these two factors are inter-linked and complement each other, however, the winter season was often brought up as a grave enough reason for many respondents to seek a better life abroad. As becomes apparent from the quotes above, the need of certain Bulgarian Roma to emigrate can be further amplified by the need to escape the harsh and unpleasant weather. Even though many of them would prefer to stay in their places of birth, they are pushed away due to an urge to escape the certain misery and hardships, especially in the cold months of the winter. The sense that they are not able to earn enough to afford heating their homes in Bulgaria makes them take the routes abroad at places where the weather is more pleasant and hot or at places where they can enjoy a warm apartment with hot water with their monthly rent. Thus, even though seasonal migration abroad can be for the reason to perform certain work during a particular season of the year, it can be as well for the purpose of escaping unwanted harsh weather.

4.2.4. Rhizomatic migration

By studying the patterns of migration of this study’s respondents it appears that it would be hard to frame them in a certain way. This is also in support of the argument that Romani migrants can sometimes follow unpredictable paths in their pursuit of greater economic benefits and the improved lives they would have as a result of it. The choice of the word rhizomatic was selected in order to describe a type of non-stratified movement from one place to another. It cannot be characterised as linear or

one that takes a particular pattern or shape but it is mainly influenced by the purpose of the migrants. It is also to do with the contemporary conditions which are characterised by uncertainty and a concomitant readiness to move to another place. As Bauman (2007) argues, today's modern world is one of uncertainty and individuals ought to move from one place to another in order to be able to pursue their life's aims and to do more than merely survive. The patterns of Bulgarian Roma migration depend on their available social and network capitals. Thus, it should be no issue for a migrant to head towards a particular destination so long as they know they have got family or capital which would help them settle in. This type of migration can be seen as sporadic or unaccounted for as it depends on the opportunities of the migrant's potential situation at the end destination. In most cases Roma migrants decide to embark on travels abroad to any destination given it will enable them to earn money and perceived better lives. This 'rhizomatic' migration therefore does not follow any particular pattern or type but is mainly fed and influenced by a migrant's availability of network, social capital, as well as their experience abroad.

"I was in Italy, a little bit in Sicily, in Bratislava – many countries, the Netherlands, England." (Respondent 35, male, early 50s, Montana)

As he has shared, the choice of destination countries for Respondent 35 has been predominantly determined by the opportunities for work abroad. Nevertheless, his most recent choice of destination, England, has been influenced and determined not by the available work opportunities there but his two sons who have been working and residing in England for a number of years. This demonstrates that even though one might predict that a migrant would follow only the niche of economic possibilities it is often overlooked that it could be not only a pursuit for earning but also family reunion.

In very many cases nevertheless, respondents have demonstrated they have 'tried their luck' in more than one country abroad. Their decisions for migrating to different countries seem to be determined by opportunities for work and a better life. For example, most of the Roma in Stara Zagora not only reside and work abroad, but also have been frequenting at least two countries – Poland and Czech Republic.

Apart from these two popular destinations for the informants from Stara Zagora, many of them have tried their chances in Spain and Greece as well.

“I went first in Poland. Later, I went to my sister - she lives in Spain. She is married to a Spanish guy. I stayed there for two-three months. I came back, then I went to Poland again; I came back...Poland then I was in Spain. Then, a little time in the Czech Republic.” (Respondent 54, male, mid 30s, Stara Zagora)

The fact that Informant 54 has his sibling who resides in Spain with her husband has proved to be a reasonable enough factor to determine his decision to go in Spain. Yet, Informant 54 has taken travels to Poland and Czech Republic which were fuelled not by availability of social capital (as in Spain) but by the chances and opportunities for work there

“I was first in Greece, then twice in Spain to pick grapes and twice in Calabria, Italy” (Respondent 61, male, mid 40s, Stara Zagora). Apparently, Respondent 61 goes anywhere and is ready to go to any country so long as he would be able to earn a living. It seems some of this work’s informants do not have a special preference for a particular destination but are ready to migrate to any country for the purpose of earning and saving money. This type of relocation from Bulgaria abroad could be seen as rhizomatic as it is determined by the ‘fertile soil’ or the opportunities which any country can offer.

“I am in Spain every four months. I have seasonal work there. I also travel to Poland – we simply go wherever there is work. I was abroad since I still did not have a passport... I was going everywhere – Romania, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia. Yes, we were travelling around almost the whole of Poland; I started in Odrin [Turkey]...I was going more often in Poland; I have made more trips in Poland, Hungary... I know the Romanian lei...I know the Hungarian money, the forints... I don’t have problems, do you understand? That means that wherever I go I am not scared.” (Respondent 72, female, 50s, Stara Zagora)

The quote above suggests that seasonal migration alone is not enough for Respondent 72. She is determined or not intimidated to tackle any place so long as there are opportunities for business and trade. She has many years of experience travelling abroad which have given her greater confidence to move away. Her experiences abroad, her knowledge and network capital have given her confidence to

venture into new and old migratory patterns. This has resulted in self-respect, confidence and ultimately her readiness to move away from Bulgaria in any instance of insecurity and for the purpose of pursuing something more.

The above-mentioned examples are indicative of the physical relocation of Bulgarian Roma from one place to another. Seemingly, they migrate as low-skilled labourers, as well as skilled professionals, as well as two types of seasonal migrants – one which is determined by the time of the year which requires workers on the one hand, and one which pushes Roma to migrate abroad due to unpleasant and unbearable winter season, on the other. All these should not suggest that the type of migration of the studied Romani interlocutors of this work is characterised only through its physical character. As we saw in the chapter of the Literature Review, migrations take other forms which are more subtle and harder to capture due to its conceptual character (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, Baudrillard 1989, 1990, Shubin 2011). Thus, even though a person can be physically immobile, they should not be considered as sedentary or non-migrant as they can experience mobilities and displacement due to various factors such as previous experiences, stories, reading books or conversations which remind them of their experiences. The next section will demonstrate that imaginative migration occupies a major role in the ways of travel for Roma. Even though the emotional and psychological side of travel have received insignificant attention, it deserves its respectable place in this analysis since it is very closely linked with their physical travels. Both physical and mental migration, it is argued, act in the form of a cycle in which one type encourages the other.

4.2.5. Imaginative migration and simultaneity

On the one side, when Roma are abroad and away from their home countries, they are not detached from the affairs of, for instance, Bulgaria. On the other side, when returning to Bulgaria, and even in the cases when they stay for prolonged periods in Bulgaria, their thoughts are often directed towards the places abroad, as well as their experiences there. That is why they did not hesitate to relate stories which were funny and memorable, but also sad and hard and thus hard to forget.

Respondent 46 is from Montana who was in Italy for about two years. Now, as he is back in his community in Montana, it seemed he went at length to describe and converse about his pleasant experiences abroad. He was obviously displaced and moved as he related to me about his observations and experience in Venice and also his unforgettable the encounter of a very beautiful bakery lady while in Italy. In both cases, his mood obviously changed, his eyes took on a dreamy look and it could be felt that these emerging thoughts, prompted by our conversation about his observations about Italy, had managed to stir something inside him and put him into another state of 'imaginative travel'.

"There are girls who are beautiful and even more beautiful still. Once I and my boss passed through a fast-food place and when we went into a pastry shop I saw an Italian lady. [...] I was completely stunned. I have never seen such a thing, though she only had baker's clothes on. I am telling you I was dumbstruck— and the light was surrounding her from below; from the window displays. My eyes were riveted. The Italian [boss] said 'What is up?'"
(Respondent 46, male, early 20s, Montana)

The detailed description which Informant 46 chose to give about the girls in Italy, and particularly the encounter with the baker, is indicative enough about his pleasant experience and observations in Italy as a whole. He was able to picture and depict a beautiful lady who is almost depicted as an alien – "I have never seen such a thing..." – with such vividness that would probably stay in his mind and travel with him anywhere he goes. This so incredible woman has appeared to Informant 46 as unreal and real at the same time. The startling beauty which the interlocutor has encountered made him hardly believe his eyes, which makes the whole encounter unbelievable, but at the same time the ordinary way in which she appeared to him – in a regular baker's outfit – made him realise she could be a real person indeed. The memories of pleasant surroundings and environment of the past make him mentally imagine and recall the female images he has come across and describe them as "beautiful and more beautiful still". Seemingly, that is a memory worthy of sharing and one which was not wiped from his memories regarding his Italian experience. Certainly, these are the physical aspects of his past experience which have stayed with him and continue to displace him, this time emotionally, even though he may be not involved in physical travels anymore.

“What can I say to you? I am used to their nature; how can I say it? A big city, Rotterdam, the port, the ships, a naval town; a big town – as if like Plovdiv. It is Amsterdam [which is first] and [then comes] Rotterdam – the second biggest town. It is Rotterdam with the bigger port. There are very big containers; from all over the world – they came from China, from everywhere. My God, I have seen ships like a whole town – one over the other, one over the other – 15-16 stories, I cannot count them. I don’t know how many tons of iron this is. There are playgrounds, swimming pools, you name it. They play football on the top [laughing]! Do you know what it is like? From here [the mahala in Montana] to the Central Cinema [in the town’s centre]. The canals, the parks, the swans – along the canals there are swans – all kinds of birds, ducks...”

Interviewer – “Do you think about there now?”

Many times! Even recently I was talking with [giving the name of a friend]. I have something like nostalgia. You can [always] earn some kind of money for a little while. (You have enjoyed your time). It’s as if everything is given to you on a tray.” (Respondent 36, male, early 50s, Montana)

Respondent 36 recalls his time in the Netherlands and he seemingly misses the way of life in Rotterdam, which results in his imaginative displacement. His emotional travels result from the novel experiences he has come across there, which have taken a special place in his mind. It could be the special and whole combination of the impressive ships which anchor so often in the significant port of Rotterdam, along with the canals and the free roaming birds which have made such a lasting impression on the interlocutor. Informant 36 appreciates his time in Rotterdam as he has learned and discovered things which have been not comprehensible before he has went there. His choice of adjectives, which aim to describe what he has seen, result in both the mental displacement of the story teller but also the person/s who listen to these vivid encounters. In both cases, these narratives can play a crucial role in their decisions to experience them again (for the story teller) or for the first time (for those who have never seen them in reality). Respondent 36 admits he misses Rotterdam and even that he has a nostalgia – a factor which often keeps individuals dreaming about places, but also one which can encourage them to visit them physically again or for the first time.

A number of returning migrants, even though they have stayed put in Bulgaria for some time, prefer to follow news and get information about the places they used to inhabit. In many cases, they follow the news, weather and also keep in touch with family members, friends and acquaintances who are abroad. The interest they

express in being connected with news, weather and updates from friends and relatives is a clear indication of the fact that they have not really deserted their places abroad, nor do they wish to do so.

“I listen to the Spanish programme. I listen constantly – about the news. I am very interested, I don’t stop. I don’t stop listening to their news, what is going on. I am simply attached to this country. I love their country. I can say it is my second country.” (Respondent 12, male, 60s, Sofia)

“I think about London night and day. I dream it (сънувам го, мечтая го) and to go there and to be able to work there.” (Respondent 58, male, early 50s, Stara Zagora)

The quotes above are quite powerful and telling in and of themselves. Respondent 58, for example, has been well-moved by the impressions he has had in London, even though he has stayed there for a considerably short period of time – less than a year – compared to his much more frequent travels and longer-lasting stays in Greece. Nevertheless, London has appealed to his liking and is able to move Informant 58 in such a way so that he starts longing and dreaming about it night and day. At the time of the interview, Informant 58 shared his intention to migrate to London and start looking for opportunities for a job and to settle down along with his close family. This is also another clear example which supports the proposition of a mutually-dependent link between physical-imaginative-physical travels of the migrant.

It is not sure if interlocutors ever stop migrating or experiencing ways of displacement. Their dreams about a pleasant place, a memorable event or a series of experiences dwelling in their minds and are the subject of their stories and dreams. Furthermore, the ways of doing things in a certain place (or country) is an expression of not only the fact that the Romani respondents get used to these places but also get attached to them. The news they follow, as well as memories, stories and experiences from abroad which haunt them are equally telling about their long-lasting effects, ways and potential of strong displacement of the Romani respondents.

“I love German music. I even have a [music] CD. I even have a German [TV] programme and I watch it. My child says ‘Are you only going to watch the Germans?’ I play it to see what they are saying on the news. I love the news.

When he goes out, I watch the news. I watch the German programme.”
(Respondent 75, female, mid 30s, Stara Zagora)

The impact of the imaginative travels may be less recognised, though they do not fail in any way compared to the physical relocation of migrants. The imaginative migration could be even more lasting as it has great potential to influence the lives and family of the migrant, who may not themselves be migratory. Respondent 75 used to dislike German cuisine. Being in Germany since 2005, now she is not only used to German cooking but she also tries to introduce it into her own family back in Bulgaria while on her short stay in her native Stara Zagora. She misses almost everything from her German environment, including news and cuisine which she is so used to now. Following the news, listening to German music and cooking their cuisine while physically in her Romani community in Stara Zagora are all favourite things which she does to remind herself about her pleasant experiences away, which undoubtedly result in forms of her displacement and travel. All these actions are indicative of not only her being used to her ‘new’ German environment but about the type of displacement or migration which is emotional. This psychological travel is characterised with the memories, special moments and actions of the past which reappear constantly or occasionally within the conscience of the person. This type of travel, even emotional, is equally powerful and lasting.

The combination of pleasant environments abroad and the cuisine migrants find there appear to be factors which move the individuals and have such a lasting effect on them that they stay connected, even though this is imaginatively and emotionally. Individuals thus often seek to re-unite and re-enact in whatever ways possible with tangible things such as foods. Tasty cuisine appears to be a topic which was often brought up in conversations and food and cooking were given as examples of and associations with the host countries. Informant 53 from Stara Zagora has been working and residing in Poland and the Czech Republic for more than a decade. There were pleasant stories which he related at the time of our conversation. He spoke about the fact that people had been very good and kind to him and his countrymen. He related about their friendly and polite characters, as well his experiences and encounters. All these are things which he currently misses strongly while he stays put in Bulgaria due to health issues. Furthermore, since there are

people from the mahala who frequent and travel to Poland and the Czech Republic, he often requests things which cannot be found in his neighbourhood in Bulgaria such as spices and bread.

“I don’t know – we don’t have these spices; there is one which I have ordered to be brought for me from Czech Republic; every week there are some people who are going via micro-buses. Now they will bring it for me; there is one type of bread there – called ‘knedlik’ it is a white bread but it is cooked with steam; you cut it, it is soft and tasty; it is very tasty. Here, however, it cannot be found. I have ordered it from there, however, you cannot get more than 2-3 pieces, because in the fridge it can only last for say 3-4-5 days, not more.” (Respondent 53, male, late 50s, St Zagora)

Being physically put in one place and not being involved in any kind of physical travel should not suggest there is no migration. As the quote suggests, Respondent 53 has experienced tasty foods while away. As a result, he got used to them and his desire and willingness to have them and taste them again, to cook with them are an expression of his imaginative displacement and forms of travel. He seems to be slightly disappointed that in Bulgaria he is not able to find the spices he is looking for. Also, the respondent tells with sadness that the ‘knedlik’ bread, which he often orders from abroad cannot stay fresh for longer than a few days. Furthermore, he carries on being with and experiencing the things which have been imprinted on his consciousness. Memorable events and even dishes are seemingly things which are able to move him and result in forms of displacement and various types of travel which are even in the form of dreams, “... their salads...their dishes, especially in the Czech Republic – I will never forget that goulash; here I am dreaming about that goulash” (Respondent 53, male, late 50s, St Zagora).

It is this work’s contention that, once the door of migration has been opened, or once the persons are involved with physical relocation from one place to another, this will result in different ways of imaginative and emotional displacement, even though they may stay put in a certain place for prolonged periods of time. This mental travel may last for indefinite times in the minds of the migrant due to their memories, which can be both positive and negative. At the times they are overtly positive and pleasant, migrants wish they could stay or be transformed to these places as if in an effort to re-enact these positive experiences or the things they have become attached to. Yet

each and every different place may be associated and bring positive and negative memories, which in time results in displacements of the individuals. In this way, once a person has had the chance to be in and experience a foreign country, this can result in their conceptual type of migration, even though this person stays physically immobile.

Informants therefore demonstrated they can be simultaneously in more than one place. They shared they often are and can be in several places at the same time. Yet thoughts, associations and sentiments for other places or things can be unsettling. Respondent 5 is a middle aged business man who has had the chance to travel and learn about various European countries, such as France, Austria, Germany, Italy and lately England. It has been in England where he endeavoured to set up a construction business and he has been fortunate enough to be profitable in his first year in London. All the positive experiences he has come across, the fruitful and beneficial environment, as well as the encountered work ethic in London, have resulted in his attachment to this new space. Thus, he has been involved with new learning experiences and encounters which have been wholly positive. While in London, however, he has been thinking about his family back home as well his Romani community. These have been a source of displacement and travel as he has been often thinking “when will my family join [me] so that [we] can be close to the business...” At the same time, while this interview was taken in a café in the city centre of Sofia, Respondent 5 was recalling, and with great excitement, about his experiences and new established contacts. Thus, he is often involved in communicating with his new friends in England. He relates that, while he is close to his family, he cannot help but be occupied and think about London: “While I am here now, I think about there; yes; I am on Skype with friends in London; we write e-mails with the people we work with” (Respondent 5, male, late 30s, Sofia).

This section suggests that there are different types of migration of Bulgarian Roma. They can be divided into two main sections – physical and imaginative. While the former is characterised with the physical relocation, the latter is related with the inner thoughts and feelings of the person which defines them as migrants. The respondents of this study demonstrated they migrate as two types of seasonal migrants – skilled

and unskilled labourers, but also as a means to escape the harsh weather during winter. At the same time, once a person gets involved with physical relocation from one place to another, and even though they may end up being physically immobile, they carry on experiencing another, more subtle, type of migration, which is be equally touching and lasting. This emotional type of displacement could be induced by searches and desire for foods, spices, news, music, past experiences and contacts and they are a form of expression or need to re-unite or re-enact pleasant or even unpleasant instances from the past. Those desires and thoughts to experience things from the past can thus be the driving force for their physical travels again and therefore we can observe a cyclic relationship between physical and imaginative mobility.

While this section has attempted to outline the types of migration of my Bulgarian Roma informants, the next one will attempt to go through the main reasons they decide to endeavour to migrate.

4.3. Reasons for migration

The informants of this study gave mainly structural and individual reasons for their decisions to physically move away from the territories of Bulgaria. Their decisions to go to another country have generally been reactions to the hardships they face in Bulgaria, and these turned out to be for reasons such as difficulties to provide for themselves and their families, discrimination and marginalisation; as well as individual – to earn money, to escape certain unwanted environments in Bulgaria or for professional reasons. Nevertheless, it appears giving structural or individual reasons for migration can explain why people behave and react in the ways they do, however, Roma informants can embark on travels abroad due to combination of reasons which are complex and interdependent.

4.3.1. Individual reasons for migration

In almost half of the cases in this study informants referred to various individual reasons which have prompted them to move away from Bulgaria to places abroad. The following sections will outline these reasons which were often brought up as

reasons to migrate – to earn money, for entrepreneurial reasons, and to escape from unwanted (home) environments.

4.3.1.1. Economic incentives

The decision of the majority of the informants to go abroad appears to be a response to their inability to earn enough in their native homes. Going abroad appears to be one of the last viable options for them to earn money and thus live 'normal' lives. As a result to their migrations abroad and their ability to earn money they start to attain standards of living that at least satisfy their most basic and immediate needs. They are able to buy food, clothe themselves, pay their rents and provide for their children. At the same time, going abroad seems to be the only reasonable option to save money that enables them to invest in rebuilding or buying their homes in their native towns. Due to their migrations and the work they do abroad, Bulgarian Roma migrants realise that there is more to life than what they used to know prior to their migrations abroad. Migration abroad appears for many of the respondents to be a decision which is about earning a living, but one which is of last resort. Yet by earning such a living means that informants are driven by their desire to work and live their lives with dignity. Even though respondents may relate that a 'pull' factor for their migration may have been to earn money, their decisions to leave Bulgaria is coupled with the 'push' factors which are linked with the structural issues in the country which they find themselves in, such as unemployment and marginalisation. Therefore, the reasons for migration abroad of Bulgarian Roma are complex and the combination of various factors which work simultaneously.

The initial decision of Roma to go abroad relates to the current situations that Roma on the whole experience in Bulgaria. In many cases, they find themselves indebted, in miserable situations and unable to satisfy their most immediate and basic needs. Also, due to their need to provide for their families, one of the members of a family moves away (as a gurbet worker) in order to help the rest of the family. It becomes clear from the beginning that migrants go with the initial intention to earn and send their savings back to Bulgaria. Thus, they are eager to compromise their comfort and health abroad as they bear the major idea in mind – to earn money which would help their families, and enable them to live better lives in their Bulgarian home towns.

The individual reasons which informants gave seem to be a reaction to their basic desire to live ordinary lives in Bulgaria and this appear as a frequent push factor for their migrations abroad.

The example of Respondent 36 from Montana is one which can be characterised as gurbet or seasonal. One of the main factors which made him go abroad was to help his family with the grave financial situation it was facing. He has went to Rotterdam with the clear intention to earn and save money which was a painfully needed resource for his family. Even though he is in his late 40s he agreed to perform any job just so that he earns money.

“... Because – now [my son] is a student – he has to pay things; [my wife] also. You know... I am sending something. And [I was irritated] because you have gone there not to enjoy your life, but to put money aside. So, because of this I started looking for work in construction. I used to work in this sector when I was young; now, I also do it, not because I am so glad to do it – it is because of no choice. It is not pleasant for me to get dirty with lime and concrete every day, or to raise shuttering and reinforcements.” (Respondent 36, male, early 50s, Montana)

The financial reason for migration is very clear in the narrative of Respondent 36 from Montana. He is clear that that he has went to the Netherlands not to enjoy life or the time he spends there but to save money. This phenomenon of migration abroad is characteristic for informants of any age. For instance, Informant 36 is in his 50s, but there was also another young family who decided to go abroad, urged by the same financial burdens and for the interest of their child. Family 31 are in their early 20s and they relate that their initial decision to migrate to Germany has been fed by the need to provide for their child. Like any young family, they want to be able to buy food, pay their bills and own a decent home. All these appear to be a burdensome task in their hometown of Montana. Before they left for Germany, they did not have enough money and had to be very careful with their spending. The young husband recalls that they used to go into a supermarket with a calculator and while shopping would keep a close account of their accumulated bill to make sure they could pay for it. The wife told of how there have been instances in Bulgaria when she has not been able to spend 0.50 stotinkas (about £0.20) for an ordinary waffle for her child. Thus, for the sake of providing for their child as well as to strive

to live a decent life, they were prepared to do any paid work abroad.

“It is not like in Bulgaria where you go into the shop with your phone calculating if you have sufficient money ... [Germany] is not like here [in Bulgaria]; here we are uneasy or even embarrassed. As I think about it, even if we both started working here [Bulgaria] it might be still difficult for us.”
(Respondent 31, male, early 20, Montana)

“Truly the job can be really hard. However, I repeat it again – it’s because of the kid. I can make a better life for him there somehow, do you understand? Not because of anything else. Just a normal life! We have had many cases when he wants some simple things; that has happened to me – I am telling you the truth – your kid asks you for a waffle here in Bulgaria, yet I wouldn’t even have change; I don’t have 50 stotinkas [£0.20] to get it. There, however I could get him anything – not to such a degree that he becomes overtly satisfied.”
(Respondent 31, female, early 20s, Montana)

The young wife also expressed the impossibility to save and put money aside for anything, much less for a house. All these anxieties in Bulgaria have a negative effect on their health and well-being. There has been a common narrative among many informants that due to their inability to earn enough or to have regular and constant jobs, they are constantly nervous, anxious and irritated due to the uncertainties they constantly face while in their home places.

“Even these five leva [£2] you cannot put aside. You will need so many years [of saving]... I don’t know if you will ever buy housing. If you want to renovate it or something of the sort... while we are young you can work and earn; you can provide for this kid so that he has a place to live; you can be calm; even if you are jobless in your older years at least you will have a place to go to. I don’t want to be in one room; for example I want to have two rooms – I don’t need much. However, how can I earn this money in Bulgaria? It is impossible! That is why I think that while you are young, we ought to do and achieve something.”
(Respondent 31, female, early 20s, Montana)

Their decision to move away from Bulgaria has been prompted by the need to satisfy the most basic needs, such as food, clothing and housing. The need to work and save money in many respondents was given as the most immediate reason for their decision to relocate. Respondent 39 is another young family who have been residing in the Netherlands for more than a decade. They see their stay there as a way to

improve their financial and overall situation. Similar to the opinion of the last family, Informant 39 believes it is their duty to secure a better and brighter future for themselves and their families while they are young. This basic and aching need to earn, which would hopefully enable them to have a better and more secure future, makes them ready to relocate to any place without having to think for too long about it. As we saw above with the rhizomatic type of migration, Informant 39 are ready to migrate to another country provided they would be able to earn good finances.

“If they promise me a good job, I am going. So, either the Scandinavian countries or Switzerland, or England. England is good as well.

Interviewer –“You mean, you associate it with the money?”

“I associate it with how many years of my life I can spend in earning money. I mean, I am still able. I mean, now I am young and everybody is looking for young people. For example, my father is 55-56 and it is harder. When he turns 60 it will be even harder. So, now is the moment for us, the youth, to make something.” (Respondent 39, male, 30s, Montana)

Informants have realised the increased potential and the greater chances they have while still in their youth. It therefore begins to be regarded by youths that it is their duty to use their potential to the fullest and earn money. It is not only that informants have realised that they face decreased chances to work due to the general economic stagnation and unemployment in Bulgaria, they also face increased chances of discrimination due to their ethnic origins, and furthermore they could be also discriminated against if they are aged. Thus, the younger Roma wish to avoid the agonies of their parents and aged relatives and neighbours, and seek to secure better futures and lives when they reach their later years.

The economic reason for migration can sometimes be quite glaring. Respondent 39 said in our conversation that even though he and his family are quite happy to be in their home mahala in Montana and enjoy the company of extended family, friends and neighbours, the very moment they run out of the necessary financial resources, they begin to look towards and are reminded of the places where money could be earned.

“It is good to be home and to be with your family. That is the best. This is because, at the end of the day, money, work or whatever – the family is in first

place. When there is a homely cosiness everything is excellent. As long as there is life and health. However, when the money is finished, we quickly remember where it comes from.” (Respondent 39, male, 30s, Montana)

Securing a living is therefore the primary reason to move away. Informant 17 lives in the Romani neighbourhood of Fakulteta, Sofia and her decision to move to the town of Ostrava in Czech Republic was because of work. She used to be happy and satisfied with the (originally illegal) work she used to do in Ostrava just because she was able to earn. In one of her returns to Sofia, however, she was able to find a regular job and thus she did not see a good reason to be away. Her chance to have a paid job in Sofia made her realise that being abroad is not necessary anymore.

“Well, when I came back [to Sofia] I had the intention to go back [to the Czech Republic] but not anymore. I found a job.” (Respondent 17, female, late 40s, Fakulteta, Sofia).

Even though her original intention was to return to the Czech Republic and carry on with her job abroad, Informant 17 did not see the need to do that anymore as she has been ‘fortunate enough’ to find a regular job in Sofia. This is another simple example which sought to illustrate the economic reasons for the emigration of many of this study’s respondents. Besides the need to secure basic financial and economic needs, there have been some informants who were allured by the increased prospects for economic prosperity abroad. In this case, it is not a matter of basic needs but one which seeks something more due to the greater potential for realisation abroad. The next section will therefore try to address this point.

4.3.1.2. Entrepreneurial reasons

As the section above tried to convey, a considerable proportion of the informants had to migrate abroad in their search to satisfy their most basic needs or as a means to survive – to feed and clothe themselves, and live their lives with dignity and provide for themselves and the future of their children. There is another group of informants whose main reason for migration abroad has been driven by the greater economic prospects and the promise of getting richer. This second group differs from the first in that they can well have ‘normal’ or good lives in their home-places and they are

not forced to move away in their search for income. The reason for migration now would not only be fed by the search for something better but also something more. The major reason given as a 'pull factor' was the greater chances of economic profits abroad. Thus, like all entrepreneurs who become persuaded by their own dreams, they were convinced that they would find greater opportunity and potential to trade and do business and become rich abroad.

Interviewer - "Why Poland exactly?"

"It was a winning country, in the European market, on the [football] stadium. 15 years ago. It was not then in the European Union, but it was part of the European market – on the stadium – [there] we were working. We were simply buying from the internal market there from the Polish and selling it to the Polish – that is how it was. That is how we were working till the end. Now it is still like this...

We also had a great desire to work. To have finances and our own money. A person lives for money. Later, when we have money, the kids are fine – simply, your family is satisfied." (Respondent 63, female, 60s, Stara Zagora)

Informant 63 has taken advantage of the collapse of communist regimes in Europe and look for places where she could earn extra money. She has been one of the first who decided to take the lead and migrate abroad. Once she found out there was a good chance for money to be earned through trade, she was eventually joined by her husband and child. The collapse of the communist regime at the time was equated with greater political and economic liberty, greater potential for access to resources and improved wellbeing. As she points out, "...when we have money, the kids are fine – simply, your family life is tranquil." (63, female, 60, Stara Zagora)

For Informant 6 earning money and gaining work experience abroad is what really matters the most, even at her age in the 50s. She is willing to be apart from her family and loved ones, even at times of religious and festive holidays and do all that is needed to secure a retirement pension from Austria. Further, she preferred to take the measured choice and work abroad even though she did not really have to. She had said in our conversation that her family owns businesses in Sofia and continues to invest in business enterprises. She and the life of her family in Bulgaria can even be characterised as 'above average', though part of this is because of the earnings and her experiences from abroad. Nevertheless, Informant 6 became determined to get a western European pension and that is why she has invested her personal time,

even though away from her family and loved ones, until she retires abroad. At the time of the interview, Respondent 6 was in Vienna, Austria. Even though she is able to see her family when on vacation, Informant 6 observed that she needs to stay and earn money as that is a priority.

“... Well, yes; work is before anything.” (Respondent 6, female, 50s, Sofia).

Another example of this entrepreneurial spirit could be observed in another respondent from Sofia, who recalls his very first impressions while being away from Bulgaria.

“At the beginning of my business career, in the 90s, along with my brother and friends of mine, we decided to travel to Germany. We had earned and saved some money, so we went to buy cars from Germany for the first time. This was my first outing. We stayed there for a week... I especially liked the fact that I could see something which is very different to Bulgaria, something much bigger; people with very pleasant and liberal attitudes towards foreigners, towards people who are not like themselves, etc. For the first time I came across foreigners [as business partners]; e.g. the people who we wanted to buy cars from. I particularly liked their fast thinking, their fast actions, their culture, the way they conducted relations; everything was in a very structured way. In that one week, while we were there, for the first time I started dreaming to start working in one of these developed western European countries.” (Respondent 5, male, later 30s, Sofia)

During his first outings in the 90s, Respondent 5 was able to have new and different business and personal experiences compared to those in his native Bulgaria. His fresh encounter with the West had been an inspiring one and one which showed him a greater entrepreneurial potential than that known hitherto. He felt during these travels abroad that race or ethnic belonging are not important – he did not feel any different from any other citizen – and decided to take an active approach and make use of such an inclusive milieu. Having realised the great entrepreneurial potential of having access to such countries in Europe, Informant 5 was able to profit over the years from different businesses in several countries, including Italy and Austria and England – his most recent business destination, where he has successfully set up and started operating independently a construction business in London.

4.3.1.3. Escape from the unwanted (home) environment

In the section above we saw that certain countries are appreciated by informants due to their less divisive and more inclusive environments and the greater opportunities for business and profit which guarantee their greater well-being and economic prosperity. Being abroad is also seen as a space which offers a painfully needed escape from environments which can be appreciated as oppressive, unwanted and unhealthy. Again, migration appears to be an act towards freedom or liberation, and a move towards better lives and futures. This other push factor appears to be a driving force behind the decisions of respondents to move away, a desire to escape certain environments which they want to distance themselves from.

Often, respondents shared negative attitudes towards the broader Bulgarian environment which was associated with a corrupt society and one which is undesired especially by parents raising their children. Even at cases when Roma do not feel directly discriminated against or confronted by ethnic Bulgarians, they still decide to distance themselves from Bulgaria. The escape from these home environments could be seen as a personal response based on a negative judgement of Bulgarian ways of life. There were several examples from this research which suggested that migrating abroad is not only a rational way to earn a living and provide for their children, but also a reaction to the home society. Several parents expressed their concerns about the constricted future of their children in Bulgaria due to growing up in environments which they saw as unhealthy. Predictably, Roma wish the best for their children and they want to protect them from corrupt environments and society. Defensively, they have developed a preference to migrate abroad, with the hope they will experience something better and more positive compared to their home places. Furthermore, a very interesting analogy which was used by several informants was that of 'hell' (Bulgaria) and 'heaven/paradise' (West). This comparison stems with associating the West not only as a source of vital economic benefit, but also as a healthy environment where children could grow up without facing the danger of a malicious or corrupt society.

To support this point, let us consider the narrative of Informant 6, again from Sofia. Even during the communist regime, Respondent 6 and her husband were trying in

various ways to emigrate elsewhere in West. Even though they had been well off in Bulgaria, and had not felt a tangible difference between ethnic Bulgarians and Roma, they were looking for ways to move away from Bulgaria.

“We were out 25-26 years ago. We used to go to Belgium, Israel... but those people [who could go abroad] were only the well-to-do. If you could not show thousands of leva as savings in the bank, that you own houses... we had all this; but we were testing the waters; we were looking to where we could migrate. Even though we were well off, we did not feel comfortable in Bulgaria. Regardless of the real estate, of the money, the respect; there was no difference in Bulgaria between Cigani¹⁵ and Bulgarians; we used to live from a long time ago in villages and towns; we were not in ghettos and mahalas; so we were respected by the Bulgarians.” (Respondent 6, female, 50s, Sofia)

As the quote suggests, they did not see themselves as lacking finances or commodities, and even though they used to be integrated among ethnic Bulgarians and not feeling disadvantaged or disrespected in any major ways, they did not feel comfortable enough to stay in Bulgaria. The respectable social status of her family which Informant 6 talks about seemingly has been not enough for her family to feel sufficiently secure in their native environment. Thus, they have been determined and ready to move away and settle somewhere else than Bulgaria.

This lack of security in their home towns is better explained by the husband of Informant 6 – Respondent 7. He related the primary urge to move away abroad and try countries of the West. It seems they never got used to, or felt at home in Bulgaria because of its environment and the attitudes of the majority, or ways of the people there.

“Nobody runs away from the good. Everybody aims (runs) towards the good. In Bulgaria there is nothing good. There is only rust, ugliness, holes, bandits (crime), corruption, no architecture, people have no manners; they stab each other’s backs in Bulgaria.” (Respondent 7, male, 60s, Sofia)

Respondent 7 is eager to escape certain features of the society which he does not like or approve of. He describes the general social landscape and features of Bulgarian

¹⁵ ‘Ciganin’ - male, singular – is a common way to refer to Roma in Bulgaria. The female singular form is ‘Ciganka’ while ‘Ciganski’ is the adjective (i.e. one could say ‘Ciganski’ for language, house, way of living, etc.)



society at large as negative and as something which he wholeheartedly seeks to avoid. The reason he and his family have decided to move away is a demonstration of his disassociation with Bulgarians and Bulgarian society generally.

“And these who have this devilish gift from God – they know how to cheat, how to drain a person and so forth – I think only negatively of Bulgarians. Yes! That is why I ran away. Because by nature God has blessed me with very big sensitivity. I cannot simply stand the speech of Bulgarians. I cannot stand anything Bulgarian.” (Respondent 7, male, 60s, Sofia)

Thus, Informant 7 makes the analogy of ‘hell’ and ‘heaven’. For Respondent 7, hell is on Earth and more precisely in Bulgaria. Living in hell is something he cannot unfortunately avoid because as soon as he comes out of his own Bulgarian house and yard he cannot help but be surrounded and encounter the people and society he is trying to avoid. Later on, he carries on describing the feelings which he used to experience while he was travelling towards countries of the west. Even though the journey towards any of the Western countries such as Austria, Germany, or Spain is very long, uncomfortable, and tiring, the thought of his escape from ‘Bulgarian-ness’ and that he is travelling towards paradise, or western European countries, has resulted in his uplifted and liberated feelings. Respondent 7 shared the great and pleasant feeling of his running away from all he tries to distance himself towards ‘paradise’. An interesting part in this analysis is that the interlocutor referred to ‘Bulgarian-ness’ as the primary reason which has been pushing him away. Whether he has really meant ethnic Bulgarians exclusively or also included ethnic Roma is a question of debate.

“[...] I am talking about Bulgaria. I cannot stand Bulgarianness, the scum – there is nothing you can be proud of; anything to be pleasing to the eye, to be pleasing to your heart and soul. Everything is hypocritical, everything is disgusting; I simply cannot express myself [strongly enough]... Everything is said so far in a very gentle way. I should find some apt words and at the moment I cannot find them. You are asking me why I ran away? Here, I am telling you why. I prefer to be counting change there and to sleep on the streets... The streets are so nice and clean, I will simply not get dirty. Here in Bulgaria, on the other hand...

In a bus or in an aircraft, you are afraid for it not to fall down, your ears get clogged; there is turbulence for kilometres and you are afraid; in the bus it is uncomfortable; you cannot stretch your legs nor can you sleep, and so forth. With the thought that I am going abroad I was up in the air as a free bird, like a dove. I was flying, flying and I didn’t feel these discomforts – because I am

going to paradise. I am running away from hell and I'm going to paradise.”
(Respondent 7, male, 60s, Sofia)

The fact that the researcher and the informants share the same Romani ethnicity and that he was perceived as ‘one of us’ prompted a heartfelt openness. In our confidential conversation in the comfort of the home of Informant 7, he was feeling free enough to speak up and refer to Bulgarians. Usually, in a normal conversation among Roma in Bulgaria, when Bulgarians are included that would automatically refer to ethnic Bulgarians. In this analysis, however, it is difficult to judge whether Bulgarianness would exclusively apply to ethnic Bulgarians or the general and predominant ways which one can find living in Bulgaria. This analysis perceives Bulgarianness based on the narrative of Informant 7, as the generally observed environment in Bulgaria which he strongly dislikes, opposes and actively seeks to avoid. For Respondent 7 foreign countries give greater choices for personal growth. Countries of the West, in his opinion, appreciate greater the talents of individuals and allow them to develop them and evolve. At the same time, they provide better choices when it comes to education and thus personal involvement:

“Why don’t you go, why don’t you try it [abroad] instead? You will be not so well for one, two, three years, but later you will [make it]. There it is, the paradise. You can settle down there because there you can specialise (improve). If you have a talent, they will help you [expand it] there [abroad], while here [Bulgaria] they stifle you – and you need only connections and connections.”
(Respondent 7, male, 60s, Sofia)

The narrative of Informant 12 from Sofia also suggests about the different way of life abroad. He is similarly convinced that Spain is much better compared to Bulgaria. This stems from the quality of life he is able to afford, the comfort he has and the social status he has been able to reach. The fact that he was able to live a different life in Spain, one which is much better and up to a higher standard, makes Respondent 12 look eagerly towards Spain and look with disappointment and indifference towards Bulgaria.

“[It is] merrier, much happier, wealthier... There it is from whiskey and up. From seafood – octopus, I put on the table whatever you like. I allowed myself to put lamb and a pig on the table; I was allowing myself to serve myself quality beer; quality rakia, quality mezze; you have to forget about this thing here. Nothing has quality [here] – nothing. I bought a ‘hamburski’ salami and I tried

baking it. It does not bake, nor melt. It started sticking – that means that it is only guts and rubbish. [...] I threw it to the dog. Why should I suffer? I have not reached that level. That is it... Sasho.” (Respondent 12, male, 60s, Sofia)

For Informant 12 what is important is not merely the fact that he earns good money abroad but also he has a good quality of life. What he is trying to say is that even though a person may have financial resources and afford things in Bulgaria, their quality is not good and even sometimes harmful. The differences in the quality of life between Spain and Bulgaria appear to be so stark for Informant 12 that he is determined and prefers to stay away from Bulgaria and what it has to offer. The quality of the salami which came out during the interview was just one basic example which he brought up. As he notes, “nothing has quality - nothing”, he tries to express his general disappointment about the public services, quality of food and his general dissatisfaction with life in Bulgaria. This is a form of grave frustration which, even though he might feel melancholic and home-sick, as he is attached to certain aspects of his native place, it is something which he judges negatively and a factor which turns out to be one which pushes him away from Bulgaria. The ending of his explanation by “that is it Sasho¹⁶!” is also indicative of the reason why he prefers to stay abroad. Such an exclamation often could be understood as an obvious reason and therefore clear enough to the researcher why he prefers to be away and distance himself from Bulgaria.

Another major reason that appears to urge a part of the Romani respondents to consider living in countries outside Bulgaria was concerns about safety and wellbeing in the future. Migrating abroad appears to be a rational choice which any parent would take in order to give a better and brighter future for their children. They are certain that there are negative environments and corrupt surroundings which parents want to avoid and therefore distance themselves from. Moreover, they see that such environments are bad and unfruitful for the future of their kids.

“Why do I need to get mad? For the stupidity of somebody? No way! [...] that is why] you seek to segregate – escape. You look for the appropriate place where you will feel well in all aspects – friends, situations, not a bad environment; bad

¹⁶ In Bulgaria, Sasho is short for Aleksandar. Sasho and Aleksandar can be read as interchangeable as they both aim to address same name and in this case it is the name of the researcher of this thesis.

people you simply [ought to] push away. I don't need them." (Respondent 51, male, early 20s, Stara Zagora)

The 'escape' of Informant 51 abroad is in his opinion a well-measured choice – a conscious and a very reasonable option. It is a major decision arising from his personal negative appreciation of his native place and its surroundings. Respondent 51 judges negatively the ignorant behaviours prevalent in his home environment and decides to react to it by going abroad. Seemingly, it is his friends, previous life experiences and the Bulgarian environment, attitudes and way of life which he wants to rid himself from. Thus, he has decided to stay abroad or in the places which he judges as more favourable.

Migrating abroad appears to be a vital option when people seek to pursue something better for their future. Going abroad is seen as a threshold which will give a new start and hopefully a better and brighter future. In the cases when Roma start to realise that the surrounding environment is being compromised and corrupt, they become optimistic that there is a way out. This escape is encouraged by the more developed and 'more civilised' image of the Western space and the promising and better lives these foreign countries offer. Thus, migrants travel to other places and hope that they will come across a place which is brighter, characterised with greater potential for personal growth and one which might offer a better future. Therefore, it is the combination of many factors which together enhance the human capital which many informants appreciate. Such capital can be the skills, knowledge and experience which they are able to acquire from abroad. The fact that they could find themselves and be surrounded by a more tolerant, just and forward-thinking society, receive a respectable education which would develop their talents, the generally increased social level, and better quality of life, are all factors which attract and pull many of the informants.

"My hope is that some things happen now and I am thus able to take him [my son] out. I will go abroad only because of him. I will go abroad only because of him so that he can improve and learn a language and he can become a person. Otherwise, if he stays here, a hundred per cent he will become a pimp... If he says here he will become a criminal; that is 100 per cent [certain]." (Respondent 54, male, mid 30s, Stara Zagora)

It is the growingly corrupt environment in the Romani neighbourhoods, and in Stara Zagora, which Respondent 54 sees as highly threatening. Due to the economic stagnation and unemployment, a major part of the residents of the Romani neighbourhoods¹⁷ in Stara Zagora have been migrating abroad as a main means of sustaining themselves, their families and their homes. Some other individuals, at the same time, have decided to stay in Bulgaria and have been resorting to illegal activities, such as drug dealing and prostitution. Even though the 'success' of such illegal activities may be short lived, and criminal figures often find themselves in jail, losing their resources or sometimes dying; they are ones who are looked up to as successful by the younger population of the neighbourhoods (both Bulgarian and Romani). Unsurprisingly, this stems from the fact that these criminal individuals are able to afford flashy cars, women and big houses. This phenomenon, however, is relatively new in the Romani neighbourhoods and could be seen as a response to increased unemployment and lack of regular job opportunities for the local Roma. It can be also argued that the value system of the general population is deteriorating due to mass unemployment and only the illegal activities left as an option for survival. The younger population in the Romani neighbourhoods predictably start to realise and consider that one of the realistic ways to reach a respectable social status is through illegal means. Respondent 54 has been able to observe the whole process, as an older member of the neighbourhood. In his own account, that is a relatively new phenomenon and has witnessed its start not longer than 3 years ago.¹⁸ Thus, he has started to look abroad as the sole option of saving his teenage child (and for the sake of his younger child) and to provide them a better future. He believes in the potential of Western countries and in ending up in another space which would be free of illegal activities which are corruptive and are contagious. There is a sense of hope that foreign countries of the West would open the eyes of his growing kids and lead them to a better and more promising future.

¹⁷ There are three main Romani neighbourhoods in Stara Zagora – Zaicheva Polyana, Lozenec and Chumleka which, even though seem part of one whole big settlement, follows its internal borders and names.

¹⁸ The interview took place in the summer of 2013

Thus far it has been argued that Romani interlocutors seek to actively avoid certain aspects of the environments which they find themselves in. Speaking about Bulgarianness, based on the earlier analysis, it is the hypocrisy of people, the jealousy and stifling of human talents, relying on connections (in order for someone to achieve something) and corruption. Also, the deteriorating way of life in Bulgaria, such as lack of good quality foods and services, and the rise of illegal and criminal activities which become predominant, especially among impoverished persons and neighbourhoods, and all combine to push Roma abroad.

The idea of the Roma environments in Bulgaria being unwanted and to be avoided and migration as a healthy and viable option for the future of children and grandchildren is also observed by respondent 63 from Stara Zagora. "So that the eyes of the kids open – it is most of all about the young children. I am telling you truly – here it is a hell" (63, female, 50s, Stara Zagora). As seen above, and similar to Respondent 7 from Sofia, she describes her surrounding space in Bulgaria as unbearable and undesirable. Thus, she looks to avoid it not so much for her own sake but for that of the future of the youths in her family.

Sometimes it is simple things such as cordial and normal human relationships which interlocutors would like to experience and find in a certain space.

"Because of the country itself, the behaviour of the people themselves, how they behave – coldly. For example, yesterday – my son got sick with fever. I went to see the doctor in 'Pirogov'. There was neither smiling nor welcoming from the front door. Very rudely 'come in!'; not looking at you, not smiling at you. This is a kid; it needs to be cosseted; it has to be protected somehow. The kid was so scared that he did not dare to give its finger for a blood test. That cannot be seen there [in Germany]. With their smile they make you relieved. That pushes me away and it irritates me." (Respondent 8, female, 40s, Sofia)

On the one hand, Informant 8 is appalled by the behaviour of Bulgarians. On the other hand, and at the same time, she is concerned about the well-being and the future of her young children. As a result, she is being pushed away due to her own negative judgement about the Bulgarian environment and, furthermore, she has taken the rational choice to migrate in order to give her children the opportunity to be surrounded by a milieu which is more hospitable, earnest and welcoming.

As the quotes above suggest, the reasons which Bulgarian Roma give for their migration can be mixed. First of all, they decide to go abroad for the purpose of securing greater finances, for entrepreneurial reasons which stem from the greater potential which Europe offers and also because they want to escape and avoid certain environments at home. There were examples in which respondents sought to distance themselves from environments which they judge negatively. This could be both Bulgarian and Romani environments and this was exemplified by respondents who live in both desegregated and segregated environments in Bulgaria. In both cases, their decisions to move away could be seen as a reaction to escape what they appreciate as negative, degrading, contagious and corruptive. Such unwanted places are thus avoided and moreover respondents are concerned about the future of their children. It is of the concerns for the children which further fuels their willingness to be away from their hometowns in Bulgaria.

As has been argued, the unwanted aspects of Bulgarian behaviours and conditions can to be found everywhere, including among certain Romani cultural practices. The original and major decision for migration for Respondent 8 from Sofia was to escape the arranged marriage her family tied to impose on her.

“I was exactly eighteen when they wanted to marry me off. It was not with my consent, it was their will, and I did not agree, so I decided to run away to my aunt in Germany. She moved there a long time ago. [My aunt’s family] returned back [to Bulgaria] while I carried on staying there....”

Interviewer – “Did you have any expectations before you went to Germany?”

“I did not have any expectations. I went only not to be married [in Bulgaria]. That was my aim – for them not to marry me off.” (Respondent 8, female, 40s, Sofia)

Seemingly, Informant 8 has decided to distance herself from the cultural practises of her Romani family while still a teenager. Going abroad had been her sole option and Germany appears to be the safe haven she had been really looking for. Even though she is now happily married and the threat of being married against her own will is not an issue anymore, and even though her close relatives are still in Bulgaria, Informant 8 fails to see any reason to staying longer in Bulgaria. The freedom and

well-being Germany offers to her and her children makes it a healthy escape, one which promises a happier life and healthy future.

As it appears from the narratives above, the personal decisions to migrate abroad revolve around reasons to gain greater wealth, earn a living and also escape unwanted environments. These personal reasons, however, are interwoven with greater structural reasons and the next section will try to address them.

4.3.2. Structural reasons

There were other structural reasons such as discrimination and marginalisation, on the one hand, and the response to increased hardships due to the financial crisis, on the other, which can be seen as reasons for migration of Bulgarian Roma. It should be emphasised that the latter and the former are interlinked and complement each other. Firstly, and as we saw above, the decision of Roma to move away is a way to pursue a 'normal' life and living - very many of the respondents spoke of their inability to find regular jobs and have a steady income, but also feel one and the same with the rest of society; this can be also linked with many of the informants feeling different on the grounds of discrimination and marginalisation based on their ethnic origins. Secondly, the overall financial stagnation and deterioration after 1989, and especially since 2008, puts the Roma as doubly disadvantaged. Now, it is not a matter of the difficulties they might experience due to discrimination and marginalisation but also a more general issue of not being able to find jobs because of a general increase in unemployment in the country. These factors combine to contribute even further the need of this study's informants to search for ways to emigrate.

4.3.3. Discrimination and marginalisation

Even though some of the respondents did not give structural reasons for their decisions to move away from Bulgaria, there are some others who talked about their personal experiences of discrimination and marginalisation on the grounds of their ethnicity. Their inability to find a paid job in Bulgaria was now resting on factors which they could not change – people's prejudices and ways of discrimination

against them. As exemplified above, the factor which starts to prompt Roma to leave Bulgaria and search for better lives abroad is their desire and hope to find a place which instead of excluding and discriminating against them would include and embrace them as full members of society. Romas' decisions to migrate abroad in these cases is a result of the arising frustration. Romani informants want to escape the unhealthy environments, which could corrupt and lead them to illegal ways of making a living. For those who have faced different types of such direct discrimination in Bulgaria going abroad starts to appear as the only way out.

The analysis for this research with the Roma from Bulgaria refutes the general idea that the Romanies are inherently mobile or 'nomadic' groups of people. Having no country of their own, the Roma have been populating many countries of the world. As a result, they adapt to these 'host' countries and often adopt certain features or ways of life and cultures from the host countries into their own. Whenever they judge a place is not good enough or threatens their well-being, they then embark on journeys to other lands. Moreover, the decisions to move and settle in foreign places are seen as a last resort. The great majority of the informants claimed they belong to Bulgaria and only travel abroad because they have to. This also agrees with research conducted in 2011 which studied the inclinations of ethnic Bulgarians, Turks and Roma to migrate abroad. It has concluded that the Roma are the group which is most likely to migrate, though it was also the group which was least willing to do so (Tomova, 2011).

Narratives of racism as a factor for migration were many. Discrimination and marginalisation of Roma was the major factor which did not allow them to have a proper or decent job. Like all Bulgarian citizens, Roma are eager to work and earn, but due to their ethnicity they were excluded from obtaining regular jobs. Instead, they were offered unqualified and low-paid jobs such as cleaning the streets.

“...you see how things in Bulgaria are; one of the things which makes me try constantly and constantly to go abroad is that here there is no way for us to prosper (realise our dreams) (няма как да се реализираме), due to the simple reason that on the one side we are hindered... you know how things are in relation to us. [...] I felt it but also [my niece] said it to me that when there are any (job) openings they are being offered to the (ethnic) Bulgarians. [...] or

more precisely said when there is something for the streets (dirty jobs) then they are offered to us...

One of the examples is the neighbour [gives his name]. There was a vacancy for a job for ambulance drivers. [...] when he went there personally and when they asked him 'which street do you live on?' yet when he said whatever..., [they replied] 'we don't have openings'...

Abroad, that does not concern me, however, here in Bulgaria, if I can hide things, I will hide them. It is because during the years I realised that the way to survive and find work and to get into places where you need to get things done you simply need to hide that you are Ciganin. That is it." (Respondent 35, male, early 50s, Montana)

Similar to many other informants from Montana, discrimination on the basis of their Romani ethnicity was widespread and was given as a main factor for their decisions to leave the country. Scenarios where menial and low-paid jobs were offered to the Roma while better paid jobs were allocated to ethnic Bulgarians were many. Doing a low-paid job, such as a street sweeper or construction worker, is hardly good for earning enough money. As Montana is a relatively small town, people are aware of the names of streets and the neighbourhoods which are populated predominantly by Roma. Thus, in instances when an employer is not able to identify the candidate as Roma due to their appearances, they are able to do that based on their registered addresses.

"Nobody has gone [abroad] because of their own choice [loving to travel and discover for leisure] (от свободия). There are people who love their homeland, such people like us. We wandered around Europe and we saw that there is no better country than Bulgaria. We have unique beauty. Many beautiful things, Bulgaria has many beautiful spots and there is no other country like Bulgaria. However, the attitude of the government and of the people is sad. They made us reach that situation – to wander around (немили недраги) as outcasts/homeless and friendless... thousands and thousands of families broke down. Many destinies have changed." (Respondent 37, male, 50s, Montana)

Respondent 37 emphasises that he and his wife went to different countries in Europe, not because of their own desire to travel and explore but due to the issues which they face in the country they would prefer to be in - Bulgaria. They appreciate the natural resources of Bulgaria, its beauty and unique nature, however, what they dislike is the attitudes of the people and the polity of Bulgaria as a whole. The quote above is informative as Informant 37 uses a phrase "homeless and friendless" [немили-недраги] – which is meant to say that the movement from one place to another is because Roma are not liked or welcomed anywhere. It also means to say that they

feel like outcasts who wander around, or to and fro, and still cannot find peace and comfort. This can be explained by the systematic exclusion and discrimination they have been facing due to their ethnic origins.

The systematic exclusion of Roma from different sectors of the Bulgarian society act as a potent reminder of their ethnicity. The fact that they would be denied a job due to their Roma heritage strengthens their feelings of belonging within the Roma. Similarly, the act of hiding their ethnic identity from the public, while searching for jobs, or responding during national statistics and censuses is another indication of their Romani identities. The following quote is an indication of a process in which a Romani identity could be born due to association with a place which is populated with Romanies.

“[I spoke to] a woman... on the second floor. I told her -‘I am looking for a job’; she saw me as a bit lighter and she said that they are hiring; she explained what the salary was; she told me something like 650 leva; I got happy. She wrote and wrote and the time came to ask me about my address - ‘where do you live?’ I said -‘Ogosta 50!’ -‘Is that here, the mahala?’ -‘Yes’. The woman said – ‘I am sorry. We have a prohibition from the boss’. She tore my documents apart. I [started to swear]... - I am not going to stay in this country anymore’ what will I do in this country? To steal from the shops? What am I to do?”
(Respondent 29, male, 30s, Montana)

The example of Informant 29 is one which demonstrates the inability of Roma to escape people’s prejudices and the structural barriers which hinder their lives as citizens of Bulgaria. It would be hard to judge and say by the example above if the woman has been racist or prejudiced or simply that she has been following a standard procedure and the orders of her superiors (therefore she might be trying to keep her own job). The example of Respondent 29, nevertheless, is not unique but similar to many of the stories the participants who (used to) live in the town of Montana. At times they could not be identified as Roma because of their darker skin colour, but their permanent addresses were telling, and as a result employment has been refused. Such life experiences of discrimination and marginalisation can certainly be quite frustrating and disheartening for the Roma public.

These examples, suggest that there are only a few options for ‘survival’ and sustenance left and one of these turns out to be migrating abroad and trying to earn a

living. The other option which is left, as Informant 29 suggests, is to become a criminal and try to live outside the rule of law. The former option has been chosen while the latter has been obviously avoided by the Romani respondents of this study. This is not to suggest, however, that the Roma who are to be still found in the territories of Bulgaria live outside the rule of law. Many of the Roma who are in Bulgaria deal with trades and businesses and do have regular jobs, even though the jobs they perform may be low paid. But it is not simply the need to earn money and extra income which has made many of the interlocutors to leave Bulgaria. It is the negative attitudes of people in Bulgaria and their widespread resentment towards the Roma which chases them away from their homeland. The narrative of Informant 22 from Sofia demonstrates well the sheer frustration which Roma can face: living in an intolerant society and with limited choices, they are left with living in their hometowns such as in the capital city Sofia:

“своята е чужда, мащехата е своя” – In other words your own mother who has raised you is foreign to you, while your step-mother, the one whom you have recently been adopted by, she [turns out to be] your real mother – that is the difference somehow and [my] feeling. Yes, that is the feeling at the moment about Germany because people there are very tolerant towards the people who want to integrate. And I believe that I and my family are one of them... (Respondent 22, male, 40s, Sofia)

The informant starts with an interesting analogy comparing his native Bulgaria as a parent who has raised him up, however, not with the love and affection he would wish for. Being introduced to Germany, a new “stepmother”, he is very glad to discover a more caring, accepting and tolerant society which makes him appreciate it higher than anything else. Recalling his life and experiences in Bulgaria, Informant 22 carries on to give us a taste of how it felt living in his native Sofia:

“So, [customers] throw money at you as if you are a beggar. [Being a taxi driver] is an ungrateful job, an ungrateful profession. Even though you go out to earn 20 leva [£8] – which is not even enough money to survive ... The thing which made me take the final decision to get away from here is when a cousin of my father was slaughtered/beheaded in 2007 in ‘Lulin’ [a borough]; yes, yes, a taxi driver [...] And colleagues found him in Lulin 6 slaughtered. I did not expect this. I thought he was in Spain and I did not know he was driving for ‘OK [Supertrance]’ as a taxi driver. So, when I found out I said to myself that is too much. It is not enough that you go out to earn a little money, that you drive the idiots all night long, they touch your radio and tell you what kind of music they want to listen to. In many of the cases they speak against the Cigani and

they don't say 'Cigani' but they say 'Mangali'¹⁹ – with slightly accenting on it. Many female customers say 'the Cigani this and the Cigani that...'

They speak the most brutal and nasty things while I just listen to them to find out how far they will reach with their prejudices and negativism towards us. That was letting me down so much. Truly, for me that job is a humiliation because it has happened to me that you do your best for people to be happy with your services, regardless of the weather conditions and all working for 2 leva and in the end they throw the money at you as a beggar on the mat. They don't apologise to you but they throw it at you literally...

What can I say to you? I have seen enough stupidity. I am convinced that in order for you to live normally in Bulgaria you need to be a criminal and I cannot be such a thing. Indeed, you need to be a criminal today. Truly, the criminals, money lenders, pimps, drug-traffickers – these are the rich people but I don't want to stay [in Bulgaria] and be a martyr. I don't want to die like my father – young. And that is why I ran away – that is the whole truth." (Respondent 22, male, 40s, Sofia)

As the quote illustrates, there is a widespread hatred and discrimination against Roma which can be felt not only in the smaller towns of Bulgaria, also the bigger ones such as the capital Sofia where people are believed to be more prone to accepting differences. Being a Roma and belonging to the Romani community can be sometimes very hurtful, painful and restrictive. Prior to his decision to migrate to Munich, Respondent 22 used to drive in his taxi around the streets of Sofia to earn his bread. He did his best to dress well, smell good, to have his car clean and welcoming so that his customers would be happy to use his services. Regardless of his efforts, however, the anti-Roma narrative as a topic of general discussion has been very offensive and hurtful for the Informant. The resentment of the general population could be felt on an every-day basis as a popular topic of conversation of his customers, who happened to often gravitated towards their negative feelings and prejudices against the Roma at large.

This simple narrative affirms the general perception of Roma as an 'Other' who regardless of how good they strive to be in this world, they will always stay as the Other or ones who are to be avoided, blamed and scapegoated. Therefore, the Roma in Bulgaria continue to be the group, regardless of how hard they try to escape the negative gaze and judgement of predominant ethnic Bulgarians, who will hardly be

¹⁹ *Mangal* is popularly used as an offensive and derogatory way to call a Roma in Bulgaria. It is a Turkish word for a black and burned charcoal stove, a grill or warmer. The word has been incorporated into the Bulgarian tongue and today is popularly associated with Roma. Plural: *mangali*

something else than 'Mangali'. They remain an equally ostracised group of people, who are perceived as the dirty and nasty Other, regardless of their deeds and willingness to be well-received by the predominant societies.

The structural hindrance of Roma can be surely blamed on a political level as well, besides on a lower social level, and that is also realised by the Roma.

"I am in despair because when the Cigani go looking for work and as soon as they see their 'dark hue' they refuse to hire them. Well, what is the government doing? Why don't they take measures, why don't they create a law and accept these people for work – not to chase them away because they are Cigani? Then, they blame them for stealing – well, they have kids, they have grandkids – these kids need food. People need to feed themselves somehow – they are [therefore] forced to steal – I even do not blame these people who steal... This is the only thing which shocks me a lot – because we, the Cigani, are oppressed by the Bulgarians. A lot..." (Respondent 14, female, late 50s, Sofia)

Informant 14 goes on to share that she does not hate ethnic Bulgarians for having their prejudices but even understands them. She feels sorry for the people who have such limited ways of thinking because she used to have negative opinions towards ethnic Bulgarians herself. Her stay in Spain for several years, however, has taught her that having negative and limiting feelings is a part of the human experience. She cannot hide her frustration, nevertheless, about the inaction of the Bulgarian government to eliminate or at least limit discrimination and the general exclusion of the Roma in her country. She blames the inability of the Bulgarian legal system and government to help the Roma live and work like the rest of the society. Thus, since many Roma have no other chances left they may resort to illegal ways to make a living.

The narrative of experienced and observed anti-Ciganism in Bulgaria was raised by many informants in the three studied towns. The negative feelings the general public have against the Roma in Bulgaria appear to be internalised by the Roma to such a degree that it is very often accepted as a fact, as a part of their everyday lives. It is thus part of the status quo to hear that somebody is denied a job or access to public amenities, such as bars, discos, swimming pools, simply because of their ethnic belonging. Other countries thus present opportunities to the lives of many of the informants which they have not experienced before. All these make them feel as if

re-born and “like white people” – a phrase which was often used by interlocutors. Abroad they would hardly be reminded about their ethnicity as they now find themselves doing what the rest of the society does, like having free access to public spaces.

“I would go [abroad] because of the work and most importantly because of the discrimination ... [thinking] [...] I liked the work [abroad]; it is well-paid... Well, yes, I like the discos; that there is no discrimination. I can allow myself to get in anywhere I want, while here I cannot. If someone is a bit darker [skinned], they are not let in. They tell you straight away –‘get lost’. For example, now if I go out with somebody darker, they will turn us back 100 per cent.” (Respondent 68, male, early 20s, Stara Zagora)

Sometimes people may take for granted certain freedoms, such as free access to amenities such as bars, restaurants, night-clubs and once they are denied these they fight for their rights. However, for some Romani interlocutors of this study it is just the opposite – they have taken for granted the fact that access to amenities can be limited and restricted and being abroad presents them with pleasantly surprising ‘freedoms’. Preferring to be abroad then appears to be about rationality for Informant 68. Migrating to Portugal and working and living there provides him not only with a satisfactory salary but also a life which is decent and free from any forms of perceived direct discrimination.

It is not clear or easy to determine whether it is the lack of job or the experiences of discrimination and exclusion which influences more strongly the decisions for Bulgarian Roma to migrate. What is informative in this section, however, is that the decision by Roma to migrate from the three studied towns in Bulgaria is determined by perceived feelings of exclusion and non-acceptance by the general public. Anti-Roma sentiments within the society and lack of adequate government policies generally combine to make it harder and more challenging for Roma to be employed in regular jobs, to earn an adequate living and live with dignity. These structural reasons appear to be integral factors in the decision of Roma to migrate elsewhere in their quest for better lives.

This section sought to go through the structural reasons which emerged to prompt migration abroad of Bulgarian Roma. These migratory processes can thus be seen as

the result of the search for something better, such as healthy environments, an escape from settings which are deemed as unwanted or to be avoided, and in the interests of a brighter future for the family. These reasons cannot be divorced from the structural factors which suppress and exclude Roma in their home towns. There is a common feeling of alienation from the mainstream societies, that Roma are undesirable and where it is hard to avoid being judged merely due to their belonging to the Romani ethnic minority in Bulgaria. All things considered, it appears that the reaction and the decisions of migrants are a response to a search for healthier, more welcoming environments; something which, even though it may be unknown, provides an optimism for a more promising and better future. The next section will try to follow how that optimism is met and therefore will go through some of the main themes which emerged as the effects of migration.

4.4. Consequences for migrants

This section highlights some of the themes which emerged as a result of the processes of migration. There are a number of phenomena which could be observed due to the involvement of the physical migration of Bulgarian Roma abroad. It would be wrong to assume that what has been observed and noted in this section is complete. Rather, these are some of the processes and phenomena which have surfaced from the analysis of the data. As has been argued above, migration involves both the physical dimension of displacement of bodies as well as imaginative mobilities and forms of travel and displacement. Similarly, this work proposes that there are different effects of migration and consequences for migrants linked to the different types of migration and these are hard to capture. Rather, this section should be considered as a snapshot of the ever evolving consequences of migration. These effects should be also treated similarly to the evolution and the study of identities – a process which cannot be caught in its entirety but as just a fraction of its multiple facets.

As it comes out, Romani migrants begin to gain vital experiences and life lessons as the result of their mobilities abroad. First of all, they find themselves in new spaces that teach them novel behaviours, that which is needed to be able to survive and be in new spaces and all these effectively help them build new networks and social capital.

A number of the informants felt like they are experiencing greater freedoms, they felt greater life-satisfaction and as more 'successful'. Concomitantly, to several informants for this work some of the experiences abroad have been negative and disappointing, laden with difficulties and challenges. Such experiences are linked with personal dissatisfactions, discriminations and marginalisation and forms of disunity within the Romani families and a greater emphasis of individualism.

4.4.1. Building social and network capital

One of results of Roma's migratory processes abroad is the accrual of new experiences. This could be linked with the building of social and network capital. Thus, they are able, due to their travels abroad, to appreciate what is needed in a new environment, the importance of mastering the host language, the close contact with neighbouring people and adapting by acquiring new skills. These adaptations seem to come as a consequence of their personal experiences abroad. Regardless of their duration of stay, most informants gained valuable life experiences which have been built through their own (life) observations and accumulated knowledge. Thus, a number of informants were able to relate what would be needed for a new migrant in order to survive and be able make it abroad. They very often pointed to the importance of learning and mastering the language of the host county and wholly relying on themselves. Counting on the help of others abroad, such as family members or friends, could be illusory. That is why many soon realised the importance of acquiring skills which would enable them to achieve their goals abroad themselves – such as language knowledge and professional skills.

There were cases when informants could not start to work simply because they could not comprehend they were being offered a job. As seen above, the primary purpose of migration was to earn a living by performing any remunerated jobs. When it turns out that there are barriers to their chances to earn, Bulgarian Roma are willing to do all that is necessary so that they can make it abroad, and predictably one of the most immediate aspects they come across abroad was the realisation of the importance of host language knowledge.

“The most important is the language. In 2001 we did not know the language. Greeks came to ask us [to work]. I was asked [by our acquaintances for help] – supposedly they were one of us, they were Roma and from Stara Zagora [уж са от наше, уж са роми, уж са от Стара Загора]. I was asking them to come and translate for me in order to find out what [the employers] want and what they are saying to me... She goes, talks [with the boss] and she sorts herself out [instead]. She takes my job (laughing). Such moments exist when you don’t know the language. As I recall these words now, I know what the Greek guy was saying - he wanted me to work for him. Knowledge of the language is a priority.” (Respondent 64, female, 40s, Stara Zagora)

Informant 64 has realised the importance of knowing the Greek language. It is needed in order to be able to perform any type of work abroad. Employers need to be able to communicate effectively and clearly and any lack of the most basic familiarity with the language poses an immediate threat to stay jobless. Seemingly, the fact that both Informant 64 and the ‘interpreter’, who was supposed to help and translate for her, were from the same town, from the same neighbourhood and same ethnicity - “from ours” as she says – and these were not good enough reasons to help each other out. Even though Informant 64 did not exclusively explain why that happened, such scenarios appear to be commonplace among Romani migrants abroad. It seems that they all compete for resources and kinship and friendship lose their importance and strength abroad as they all are there for the same purpose – to earn and save. Even though that first experience may have been disheartening for Informant 64, it has been a valuable one as she realised that she cannot put her trust in her Romani neighbours. She had to master the language and rely on herself instead. Knowing the host language is vital and necessary for the abilities of migrants to stay, work and therefore make it abroad. Not knowing the language would mean fewer chances for earning money, being cheated and lied to, and even worse being unable to earn anything.

A similar example from Informant 23 from Sofia is given. Upon her arrival in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, she and her family used to rely on the help of family friends for interpretation.

“...Before, I could not speak [Dutch] – the first year itself the person was asking for someone who [can translate] Dutch [for us]; I took him to [our friends] and [they] did not want to translate for me. [They said to me] completely different things. Later, that person asked me - ‘what are these people to you?’ - ‘Why?’ – that was later when I started speaking Dutch. He said to me

that these people were saying very bad things [about me]. [Our friends], however, got jealous because I had just arrived and somebody had helped me with getting proper documentation (so soon) while they had been there for 10 years – Can you imagine, they still didn't have documents.” (Respondent 23, female, 20s, Sofia)

As argued already, one of the crucial factors for Romani migrants to move to places abroad is the perception that they would be able to earn money. Another crucial factor is the idea that once they arrive abroad they would be hosted (at least for a while) and helped by a (Romani) family, friends and acquaintances; this also closely resembles the chain migration pattern in which they follow the routes of family, friends and neighbours abroad. Several of the interlocutors, however, shared their experiences that that even though they could rely on the help and hospitality of friends and relatives in their initial arrivals abroad, this ‘help’ has been partial and sometimes malicious and harmful. As Respondent 23 demonstrated, their friends not only did not help her and her family with a genuine translation but also bad-mouthed them. That is why even though the availability of network capital abroad (someone who can host you while in your first days abroad) is essential, experience shows that a migrant should not count on it fully. Migrants need to be prepared to learn the language of the host country and the sooner that is realised the better it is for them and that would help them achieve their goals.

“Well, the first thing you need to learn is the language there. You need to gain everything by yourself. I am better with Italian rather than Calabrian – at least 65-70%.” (Respondent 61, male, 40s, Stara Zagora)

One of the things which Informant 61 has learned from his experience as a migrant in Italy, Greece and Spain is that one should solely rely on themselves and their own knowledge and abilities: **“Interviewer – “What did you learn from these three countries?”**

“I learnt the languages and other things such as being real with people. To be fair to the other people; not to do what they do to us. A lot of things of this kind. So, those of us who go there, we changed very quickly. We leave here as sheep but there we become wolves. You can understand me as you wish... Your kin does not count abroad (you cannot count on your family/relatives abroad). [Няма брат брат, няма сестра сестра, няма братовчед братовчед.] There people become like wolves and like beasts. That is all because of money. It is

because of the struggle about who is to take the job.” (Respondent 61, male, 40, Stara Zagora)

The importance of knowing the language and not counting on anybody’s help, no matter who they may be, is highlighted by Respondent 61. When one cannot rely on the help of others, then learning the host language would enable them to rely on themselves and their abilities abroad. This is because things and relationship abroad are different and change they are not what they used to be like in Bulgaria. Similar observations have been noted by other respondents and this can be explained by the major quest of Roma migrants is to get a job and earn money.

Thus, they soon realise the urgency not only to learn the host languages but also learn new skills. Respondents learn to cope in the new place, they gain important life lessons and experiences.

“To tell you the truth, I had never dealt [with agriculture before]. [...] At the age of 41 I touched a hoe for the first time there [in my life]. I had been working any other job but in agriculture... we did not own land, so I did not know anything. However, we learnt and this is what we do [for a living].” (Informant 34, female, 50s, Montana)

Family 34 has been living and working in Portugal for 11 years. Their original aim, like the majority of the people from the Romani neighbourhood in Montana, has been driven by the need to make a living and that is how they went across and learned agricultural work. Even though Informant 34 has a post-graduate degree in accounting, she and her husband and their children have been involved with agricultural work in Portugal. As a result, they have managed not only to master the work which they have been required to perform, but also, gain the appreciation of their employer. Thus, due to the trust which they have gained through their acquired skilled, they were asked by their employer, among all the other workers, to stay in the site of the greenhouse. This earned trust is well appreciated by Family 34 and it is a matter of surprise and pride.

“The first two years I was renting and thus paying for our accommodation. In the third and fourth year the boss gave us accommodation which was in the greenhouses themselves, where the tractors are, where the warehouse is, where their buses are, with the computer which sprinkles the greenhouses. They did that especially for us so I, my son and my husband moved there. They gave us

the key to the external gate, we lock it in the evening and in the morning we unlock it. If I say I am a Roma would they give me all this on trust? I don't know..." (34, wife, 50s, Montana)

It has been their reliability, credibility and professionalism which have played a positive role in gaining the trust and appreciation of the employers of Family 34. The family's agricultural work experience in Portugal has furthermore resulted in building the confidence and self-assurance for having gained a set of certain skills. As a result, their son has been inspired (and at the time of the interview was hoping to get funding) to start up his own agricultural business. The acquired networking and social capital of Roma interlocutors as a result of migration in turn gives birth to other subjective feelings such as of wellbeing, 'success' and forms of freedom. The next section will attempt to testify to these points and bring relevant examples.

4.4.2. Increased optimism for the future

It is important to note that feelings such as 'freedom', 'success' or 'well-being', are to be understood here as the relative feelings and judgements of the Romani interviewees. Nevertheless, it could be inferred there are certain facets and effects which are being evaluated as positive and good as consequences of their travels abroad. Very often, informants reflected on the positive ways their stays abroad have had on their lives. In many instances they spoke about things they have liked, that have contributed to their worldviews, about their greater and more positive outlooks for the future – all these resulting into perceived greater life-satisfaction and better feeling about themselves.

To continue the example of the previous narrative of Husband and Wife 34, their experience in Portugal has given them comfort and optimism for a more prosperous future. This is also apparent in the actions of their son who is eager to apply his skills towards establishing his own business in Bulgaria.

Husband – "[my son] will stay [in Portugal] till New Year and then he will come back. He has to come back to try to run a business here [in Bulgaria].

Wife – "[...] He wants to apply [for sponsorship] as a young farmer. His boss has 6-7 orange groves – 500 000 m2 land. They [...] the product [which produces cacao] ; [they grow] olives, what else... tangerines – he supports them, cleans them.' Husband – '[my son] works there alone. I worked with him

for seven months...He is really talented and versatile. He can help you with any work. You can count on him! You can!” (Family 34, Husband and Wife, 50s, Montana)

Due to his work experience as a farmer, the son of Family 34 was able to gain beneficial human capital and confidence. Thus, he has applied for sponsorship from a European Union programme for young farmers and he is making a courageous effort and the first steps towards starting up his own farming business in Bulgaria. Certainly, his abilities and entrepreneurship sense are also the source of pride for his parents and family. As a result, Family 34 has got a boost of optimism for a more prosperous and better future. Having something to look forward to is certainly a factor which brings positivity and a sense of freedom to choose what one might decide to do in their future. In the example above, the decision to invest in a business in farming may sound like a bold but unreasoned decision at a time characterised with economic uncertainties and hardship, especially for the Romani minority in Bulgaria. Were Family 34 not able to go to Portugal and gain network capital there, even though as low-paid workers, they would hardly imagine their son would undertake similarly serious decisions to consider farming as his profession. Thus, the work experience of Family 34 as farmers in greenhouses in Portugal has given birth to a form of transformation. This transformation is characterised with greater ambition and imagining different and better futures, which in this case has provided a source of pride, wellbeing and a sense of good achievement.

There are other cases which similarly point towards the emerging feelings of parental pride. As seen, one of the reasons which drives migration is the desire to escape negative home environments, and more importantly for the sake of providing a better future for the children. It does truly appear that going abroad provides greater hope and future for the younger Roma population. As a result, parents become glad and at peace due to the achievements and future prospects of their children.

“All of [the Roma are with their] families and their kids go to school. Young children learn the language [by] the second year. The other thing is – our kids perform best as students; they know the most as students. By all means they first know Dutch and later English – by all means.” (Respondent 33, male, 50s, Montana)

Being one of the first persons from the Romani mahala in Montana to migrate to the Netherlands, Respondent 33 has been there long enough so that he is able to have an informed opinion about the processes and consequences of migration of his fellow Roma from Montana in Rotterdam. He has come to realise that being in a developed Western country like the Netherlands is a great asset which brings a number of intangible and subtle benefits for the Roma at large. Moreover, in the opinion of Informant 33, one of the best ways to address the current situation of poverty, unemployment, and systematic exclusion (or non-integration – the preferred word by many policy advocates and Roma alike) is migrating to a Western European state such as the Netherlands. It becomes obvious from the conversation with Informant 33 that there are a number of well-appreciated benefits which help the often impoverished Romani population and provide greater prospects and hope for a more prosperous future.

For Informant 33, the first and foremost aspect of Romani ‘integration’ abroad would come through their education, which in turn would result in many opportunities for jobs and realisation of professional status. He has realised the benefits of speaking several Western languages and he is happy to observe that the growing Romani children in Rotterdam not only master Dutch and English but are also some of the best pupils in schools. These facts are a source of pride and happiness and Respondent 33 is able to therefore foresee a more promising future for his children and grandchildren. Certainly, these results combine to bring about his feelings of pride, success, well-being, and a sense of achievement in life.

“The positive thing which I realised is [I know what we need]. The sole thing which can help the Roma to come out of this unemployment, in this time of crisis - because Bulgarians give that particular reason – we, our kids and our grand-children, we need education – first of all. To become professionals. By all means a Western language. By all means you need to know two [different languages]. For example, in the Netherlands you cannot work there, and have the right to work there without knowing the language. They say to you ‘bring me this and that’ if you don’t know what they are talking about... You need to be able to fill out a form, to be able to read. They will easily get you lifting things, however, it is good to have a profession in your life...

You need to advance as much as you can. We are talking about the generation, from now on, which thinks about the future... The real integration is there. If you live here [in Bulgaria] for 100 years, how will you integrate yourself? If a blind person is being led by another blind person [in Bulgaria] then both of them will fall into the pit. What is the good that I see in a Bulgarian so that I get

integrated? What could I learn/inherit from them?" (Respondent 33, male, 50s, Montana)

The chance that Informant 33 has had as a migrant has opened up new personal perspectives about life. It seems he is happy and more than content with the decision he has made to go abroad. Now, he puts things in perspective and is assured he has made the right choice in emigrating. There are several main points which can be inferred from the quote above. First of all, Informant 33 talks about the conditions for inclusion of the Roma, for which education and acquisition of knowledge are essential. Having acquired new knowledge himself and noticing the trend for learning among the youngest generation makes him realise going abroad is the way to success and prosperity. Secondly, he highlights the fact that working in low-paid menial jobs is not enough. What he sees as better is when people have their own professions, which in his opinion would be in order for them to be able better provide for their families. Therefore, there is encouragement for adaptation and enthusiasm to achieve high goals. Thirdly, Informant 33 is of the opinion that there are limited prospects for the professional and future development for Roma in Bulgaria. This stems from the fact that parents cannot send children to school and provide them with a proper education, which would make them competitive enough in the jobs market. And finally, Informant 33 criticises the Bulgarian system generally. He believes that Bulgaria lacks a proper leadership, it is ignorant and there is nothing of real value that Roma could learn and benefit from while living within the Bulgarian society.

The observations and experience of Informant 22 from Sofia are similar to those we saw above. Respondent 22 has four children and has been living and working in Munich since 2007. After about seven years living in Germany on a permanent basis, Informant 22 is now able to appreciate some of the effects and aftermaths of his stay in Munich. One of the points he conveyed with a sense of great appreciation was that his children have been able to master the German language, adapt to the German way of life and excel at school. For him, the path his children currently follow in Germany is the right one and therefore the source of his pride and feelings of respectable achievement in his life and as a father. Now, after having spent several years in Germany, Respondent 22 feels more comfortable with himself, he has

greater self-respect and a more positive and optimistic worldview. He considers the status of his own children not only better and higher than their Romani peers in Bulgaria but also better off than ethnic Bulgarian children.

“My kids cannot write in Cyrillic – they know perfect German – writing and talking. The teachers have told me themselves that my second son is better in the German language than the native-born German kids. He speaks better and he writes better than them grammatically. That can only flatter me – I can be so proud with that.

They speak Bulgarian. They speak Bulgarian [in Bulgaria], though while in Germany they speak only in German at home. He and my middle child, they speak only in German between themselves.... I do not deny that children are not the same as we used to be, but in comparison to the Bulgarian kids, I would say that my kids are at a much higher level than the Bulgarian kids. And let's not compare them with the Romani children in Bulgaria – the difference there is cosmic.” (Respondent 22, male, 40s, Sofia)

The current social level of Informant 22 and his family is something which he rates highly and positively. He is able to foresee a greater, more prosperous and less worrisome and anxious future. His daily worries and thoughts now are no longer directed towards concerns of providing food on the table and the most immediate needs of his family. Respondent 22 has been able to overcome these and strives for more, such as greater professional realisation. This example, like many others, has demonstrated that one of the consequences of migrating abroad is a sense of increased life-satisfaction, achievement and well-being. Being able to observe the leap Informant 22 was able to make abroad makes him rate his decision as positive and appropriate - he is no longer anxious about how would he feed and clothe his family but how to excel professionally. The next section examines how ‘success’ was viewed by migrants.

4.4.3. Improved social status; stories and perceptions of success

Stories about ‘success’ seemed to revolve around migrants’ abilities to earn money, to acquire education or to get decent jobs. These points indicate the lifting of their social status and upward social mobility. What is informative here is that respondents brought out these examples themselves. Their subjective feelings about their contentment abroad are bifurcated – feelings of pride and of general comfort and

well-being, on the one hand, and feelings of downward social mobility and discomfort, on the other.

A substantial majority of the informants for this study spoke proudly about their satisfaction in being able to earn money abroad. It turns out that most of the informants have been able to achieve what they originally wanted – to earn money and make a living. On the whole, they are now able to earn enough so that they can meet their most basic and immediate needs: shopping for groceries, have food and drink and cloth themselves without being primarily concerned whether they would be able to afford it at all.

“I would not say it is merrier [abroad]. The good thing there is that everybody has money, so nobody is feeling uneasy to attend an engagement party, for example, or a wedding, or it does not matter. While here, even if somebody wants to attend your party, they don’t have change in their pockets. For example! There, money is not the major problem. It is more precisely the time, how you arrange your time, otherwise, the financial part is not [any longer] the most important.” (Informant 39, male, 30s, Montana)

Often informants related they feel more ‘integrated’ as a result of their lives and experiences abroad. These were associated with their perceptions of being able to afford and do what the surrounding population does. It seems such feelings of ‘integration’ point towards less differences and discrepancies between themselves, as Roma, and the majority populations. While in Bulgaria, they used to feel there is a gap between the majority of Roma and the rest of the society, abroad this seems to be no longer the case.

“...once you are used to the language, it becomes easier and easier. The work is good, the wages are good; you can allow yourself to go anywhere; to buy a car with a working week’s wage and so forth. So it is much better [in the Netherlands] than it is here [in Bulgaria].

Interviewer – “Do you feel you have taken something from their culture?”

“From theirs? Well... I don’t know; maybe some humility, I don’t know. Many things... Many things. I have never thought about it. However, certainly there are many things, [thinking for a moment]. We can say we feel as if we are integrated. My family feels more integrated; more kind, more polite (courteous)... taken as a whole; from their culture... more integrated.” (Informant 28, male, 40s, Montana)

The story of 'success' here is linked with the feeling of being more 'integrated' into the society. At first, Informant 28 points towards the ability to earn decent money in Holland. He was able to learn Dutch, and as a result of this gradually he was able to find a job which would pay him enough so that he is able to appreciate its value. Respondent 28 related about the wide range of friends and his increased social contacts. Furthermore, he shared that at times of economic hardships he can wholeheartedly count on his Dutch employer. In his opinion, he and his family are more humbled. This could be the result of their regular labour and ability to earn their living. They know what it takes to afford their commodities and their lives abroad has taught them to appreciate life more. Also, due to the fact that they do not feel different in any major way from the rest of the rest of the society, they feel 'integrated'. Thus, those that come back in Bulgaria are no longer 'the same' compared to the ones that 'leave'.

"There are exactly Cigani from Berkovitsa who have been living all their lives in the woods. They came here [in Germany] and they saw what life is like. They work and keep silent; they started wearing these tight trousers as well – the new fashion."
(Informant 29, male, 30s, Montana)

The point of 'change' and 'evolvment' of the migrant are also obvious here. The above quote could be seen as one which relates directly about the ways in which earning a living abroad can affect Romani migrants. The statement was made by Informant 29 who is originally from the mahala in Montana. Here he gives a judgement towards a group of Roma who are from a neighbouring area not far from Montana - Berkovitsa. Since the Roma from Berkovitsa are more impoverished than those from Montana, they live in greater misery and are usually 'Othered' by the Roma from Montana due to their lower social status. Germany has been a place which has brought Roma from Berkovitsa and those from Montana together. They often find themselves working together, living in the same vicinity and also frequenting the same social places. As a result, Respondent 29 is able to judge the ways in which those Roma from Berkovitsa begin to behave. As a result of their improved financial situations, the Roma from Berkovitsa, like any other person, are eager and do all that is possible to be in tune with the latest fashion trends. The

migrations abroad for some of the most impoverished Roma have uplifted their status to a level which has come as a surprise to many.

“I bless the people from Europe because if it were not for them, then I don’t know what so many Roma were going to do. How would they survive here and make ends meet. It is guaranteed that half of those who are abroad would not be alive now. I give you a guarantee. I have seen people there who literally did not have a place to live here [in the mahala in Montana]...

I say to myself that if it were not for going abroad, him taking the risk and leaving, I don’t know how he was going to survive. Now, [names the person] has a mini-van, his son has bought an apartment, the other as well.”
(Respondent 37, male, 50s, Montana)

Again, Respondent 37 argues that emigration is a type of ‘survival’ or an option of last resort. Bulgaria’s EU membership gave Roma greater ease to travel and an ability to reside in other EU states, even though a predominant part of the Romani respondents have been frequenting foreign countries before Bulgaria became a Member State in 2007. Nevertheless, what Informant 37 was eager to convey is that now it is much easier for Bulgarian Roma to travel, reside and work within the EU borders. Thus, their chances to help themselves are greater. Even more, Informant 37 is keen to send his blessings to the single policy which seems to be making a tangible difference for Roma – they are being able to travel freely within the boundaries of the EU, which seems to have had a positive influence on their lives. Were some of the most penurious Roma in the mahala in Montana not able to migrate in search for a new start, their status was hardly going to change and, even more, most probably they were going to deteriorate. Now, some Roma who were perceived as hopeless in the Romani neighbourhood in Montana were able to uplift their social status to much higher levels. They can find themselves in spaces abroad which enable them to uplift their social standing and thus stand in stark contrast to their original positions in Bulgaria.

4.4.4. Feelings of ‘liberation’

As has become obvious, one of the most tangible consequences of Romani migration is the emergence of feelings of well-being, higher life-satisfaction, security and greater freedom. It would be hard for someone to speak about well-being and life satisfaction if they are not able to satisfy their most basic needs, such as provision of

food, clothing and a comfortable home. Once a person is able to meet their immediate and most basic needs, they can expand their patterns of thinking and expand their life aspirations. The satisfying of other needs now begins to surface, such as thinking about and investing in the future, pursuing education, professional realisations, and the pursuit of religious freedom. As a consequence of migration, there is therefore an emergence of a form of 'liberation' and emerging 'freedoms' which Roma could not initially imagine prior to their travels abroad.

"At the beginning you are looking for a job and it is not easy, but after you find a job and start working and you earn good money, normally, you start affording better clothes, you allow sending your kids to school, kindergartens, paying your health insurance and when a person is financially secure a person can afford behaving well – that is what changes in a Rom. It is because here in Bulgaria there are Roma who [go through the garbage containers looking for food and other 'valuable' disposables]. However, they don't want to dig in the containers. If they have work, if they have money, they would dress well and they would look normal." (Informant 40, male, 40s, Montana)

"[Living in] Germany is a country which collects a lot of bills – it gives but it also takes in a legal way. However, we can afford living normally by doing honest labour – to buy the most basic things; even sometimes we allow ourselves to be spoiled. Yes – a phone to my kids...I have changed cars several times – I don't buy new cars, second hand but good cars." (Respondent 22, male, 40s, Sofia)

Informants 40 from Montana and 22 from Sofia both give similar accounts of what changes once a Rom is able to earn enough. They are now able earn enough so that they can feed and clothe themselves and their families better; they can afford to pay for health insurance, to send their kids to kindergarten and to afford education. Also, to afford a cell phone and a second hand vehicle are seen as normal things which are positively appreciated, even though these it was not easy to afford these things before Roma migrants went abroad. From the narratives above it appears that migration abroad could be a form of a natural and positive progression which is well realised and perceived by the respondents. We could observe a progress of upward social mobility in which the Roma are no longer the dirty misers with few aspirations for life and progress, but as 'regular' citizens who have the same ambitions as the rest of the new societies they live in.

Further, the migrations of Roma abroad can be liberating, which give confidence to the migrant, expands their worldview and gives them greater freedom. The

considerably little amount of time which Informant 5 has spent abroad, about a year in London, has given him great realisation and confidence. His experience there has given him a greater perspective and a broader horizon for his future life aspirations and his personal potential. Before his first longer stay away from his native Bulgaria, Respondent 5 used to think he would not be able to live elsewhere. He used to frequent foreign countries for business and leisure purposes, however, the scope of his actions were limited within the boundaries of his native Bulgaria. Now, Informant 5 has managed to realise greater potential for business, he has managed to learn a new work ethic and acquired new aims and aspirations for life.

“Honestly speaking, even though [Bulgaria] is my birth place, right; as I have been working in London, I feel somehow as if I am in the air and as if I am everywhere; I mean, before I went there I was strongly stuck; I have never imagined I would be able to get away for such a long time; however, from the moment I started living there, and as the system made me feel comfortable and I felt free... I have been unafraid to limit the scale of my dreams; all in all, I feel free. I do not have the need to feel constrained to a certain place. That is the good thing about democracy and about free thinking.” (Informant 5, male, late 30s, Sofia)

The physical relocation of Informant 5 enabled him to experience a form of liberation. It is the system which he refers to as one which was hospitable to him and that is why he managed to adjust to it quickly. He seemingly is not fearful anymore and has realised an untapped potential for both personal and professional growth. Respondent 5 has realised there is no need for him and his family to stay put in one place, but that there are many other places where he could feel and do better. Thus, his experience abroad has resulted in a form of rootlessness and de-localisation. He is no longer to be tied to any one particular place, but he has realised he could be “in the air” and “everywhere” at the same time. The narrative of Informant 5 from Sofia is one which illustrates well the birth of new powerful and liberating feelings due to experiences of migration.

4.4.5. Negative sides and experiences as a result of migration

Being away from your home country is not always pleasant and the perceived benefits are not necessarily appreciated positively by all. There are examples of Romani migrants who felt their experiences abroad have resulted in various negative

emotions, forms of alienation, health issues and discrimination and marginalisation. Even though earning money is needed and vital for the survival of individuals, the sole pursuit to gain money, unsurprisingly, can result in certain health and emotional issues which are of equal importance and value.

Some informants described their lives abroad as boring and monotonous and others felt they were being exploited. They often talked about their days abroad as characterised predominately by work and with little time for doing things which are different than routine work such as hobbies and other pleasant leisure activities. Thus, their primary concerns which may have been to earn and save up money, can transform into an unhealthy competition between the Romani migrants. There were examples which were brought up by informants of jealousy and naked individualism, a form of competition regarding who will earn more money abroad. The new space is often described as beneficial financially, but not so emotionally. This is because the primary focus of their lives seems to have shifted. If before migration they used to honour family relations and mutual respect, now abroad these seem to lose these values as they are in a new space with a certain goal – work and earn money. As seen earlier, it was said in many cases by interlocutors that one should not rely on the help of kin, relatives and neighbours abroad as they are all competing for the same resource. Not surprisingly, the tone is set now for a more individualistic and highly competitive behaviour which might compromise comfort and well-being.

Even for some who have went abroad for other reasons than work and earning money, being and living abroad could be negatively viewed. Unlike the majority of the respondents, Informant 42 from Montana has been abroad for the purpose of education and professional development. He graduated with a Master's degree from the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, and had work experience at the European Roma Rights Centre, Budapest, the European Commission in Brussels, and in the USA. He realised the cultural, academic and professional benefits of his experiences abroad, however, he does not rate it highly as a whole. For him, it is more important to live in environments which suit his character: he loves to be around family, friends and people with whom he could converse, share his emotions freely and relate to – factors which nourish his emotional well-being. Respondent 42

missed the contact with friends and his wider social circles. By his account, the lack of meaningful social interaction has let him down and resulted in an emotional downturn. This is how he rated his general experiences abroad:

“Well, to tell you, quite beneficial - intellectually. I guess it is only this! I mean, emotional-wise – not so well, to tell you...it was good, however, emotionally I was a bit suppressed in Budapest because you communicate with 5-6 persons, the language is very strange.” (Respondent 42, male, early 30s, Montana)

Similarly, Informant 42's stay in Brussels as an intern in the European Commission has been positively appreciated in terms of work experience, however, it was not so highly appreciated considering his emotional and psychological wellbeing:

“Positively, absolutely! [However] there were some people who simply do not allow [social] contact and they are a bit limited. For example, the people in the Commission. [yes, they are at a higher level] but I am not a big fan of such people in general. I told you, I am a sociable type – I love communicating, and you know ...I am on a more grounded level; [more down to earth]. I am not a snob in any way. That is all...” (Respondent 42, male, early 30s, Montana)

The emotional well-being and necessary healthy social contacts are facets which migrants missed painfully, regardless of the purpose of their travels abroad. The following is the account of another migrant from Montana who has spent 12 years in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

I don't want to be there [abroad]. I am satisfied in Holland [because] I have earned money; I have been working/earning... however, even the money is not enough to keep you [to stay put in Rotterdam]... Life is dull, monotonous - you go to work, come back home and go to work again– it is not like our life ... [where] you will come out and drink coffee with friends! They all drink [coffee] at home. If you go to drink coffee in the morning, a cup will cost you 3-4 euro. You do the maths and realise 'how will I give so much money for coffee [outside] if I can get a whole jar which will last me for a month.' You think about money there, however, here you don't think about this. You go out and drink coffee.” (Respondent 30, male, 50s, Montana)

The general urge of migrants to save up and work makes their lives abroad boring, dull and monotonous. Informant 30 emphasises that he misses his old life where the pursuit of money has not been the primary aim or purpose of life. Like Informant 42, he seems to yearn towards a place which is characterised with greater emotional well-being due to the healthy social contacts and variety of things to do.

... The thing is that there the monotony is killing us – we don't have our Bulgarian mentality – you meet somebody and you sit to drink and talk; to go somewhere and do something [together]. That is what I miss...

Well, many [Roma] live there but I am with my family. We gather together with our close ones from the Roma, but not with everybody. There is some kind of envy between us; some form of competition – yes. Some form of pointless competition of a sort. They have some self-respect which is very simplistic, based on nothing. They are concerned constantly about finances. They do not try hard to study, to work on doing something serious; apart from finances, nothing else interests them – that is what they think about only.” (Respondent 12, male, 60, Sofia)

Even though Informant 12 has been living and working with his family in Madrid for about 14 years, he perceives their life there as just boring. He emphasises the routine of every-day life which is not the same as in Sofia: characterised with greater social contact in the outdoors, freer, idler and less occupied with business and earning money. What becomes apparent, nevertheless, is that there is a paradox. On the one hand, many migrants leave the space in which they may have enjoyed a relatively healthy and enjoyable social environment. On the other hand, the price they pay for being able to work and earn now is that of compromising socially and psychologically more fulfilling contact with family and friends.

What appears to be similar for many respondents is they decide to put up with constant hard work and sometimes with the cold-hearted behaviour of employers for the sole purpose of earning a living. One can imagine, such lives are neither enjoyable nor preferred.

“...that is why we go abroad, because we don't have money. Maybe it is better in the other countries, I don't know. You close your eyes with this agrarian work... In the morning you get up and again off you go to work – from work back home, and from home to work – that is our life.” (Respondents 65, female, 40, Stara Zagora)

“The ‘stranieri’ [using the local word for ‘foreigners’] who are working, no matter what kind of work, whether in a shop or looking after a grandma, you are not having a rest. No rest – only hard work (никаква почивка, само гърч, само гърч); solely very hard work... I don't like being abroad at all. Even if I have millions of euros. I am not a materialist.... If you give me change it is welcome so long as I can pay my bills, the electricity [in Bulgaria], not abroad. There you are a slave and they step on you.” (Respondent 74, female, 30s, Stara Zagora)

It is the financial reasons which both respondents 40 and 74 highlight as the primary ones which have influenced their decisions to be away from their countries. Access

to economic assets, however, seemingly cannot always be equated with better lives. The word *gurch* [гърч] which Informant 74 uses to describe her daily life as a worker in Calabria is meant to portray and express the hard, unbending and continual efforts they need to undertake in order to earn money. Nevertheless, they decide to put up with such hardships in their hopes they will save enough money that they could live better lives in their native places in Bulgaria. Not surprisingly, some of the most common factors which the Romani informants brought as reasons for their return to their communities in Bulgaria were deteriorating health issues (which prevented them from doing their jobs abroad), not able to live separated from beloved family members and kids, because they were able to find a job back 'home', or because they could not earn enough abroad.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to describe the general processes behind emigration processes of Bulgarian Roma. Thus, it should be considered as the one which sets the scene and tone for the discussions developed in the chapters to come.

There were three central themes which were explored here: the types, reasons and consequences of migration of Bulgarian Roma. In the first theme – types of migration – it was argued that Bulgarian Roma can be seasonal (or *gurbet*) migrants, which can be both skilled and unskilled. Also, Bulgarian Roma have demonstrated they travel abroad not only because of the working season but also because of the season of the year (prompted by the more favourable way to spend the harsh winters abroad compared to Bulgaria). In the section 'rhizomatic' type of migration it was argued that migrants move from one place to another in an erratic fashion. Such a movement of migrants did not follow any one particular pattern but was mainly determined by the perception of a 'fruitful soil' and the ability to thrive abroad. All these physical relocations of bodies are intricately linked with the imaginative, emotional and psychological types of migration. These two types of migration appear to act as mutually encouraging and in a circular fashion. People may decide to travel to distant places due to the narratives and accounts of increased chances for finding (better) paid jobs. Conversely, a returning migrant can be in several places simultaneously, which makes them a migrant and a non-migrant at the same time.

Also, a physically immobile person could become physically mobile again, encouraged by their memories of the past.

The reasons for migration have been broken down into two main strands – individual and structural. Similar to the relationship between physical and imaginative travels, it could be argued that the individual and structural reasons for migration have been intricately linked and influence each other as well. While individuals travel abroad to earn money, escape unwanted environments at home or for entrepreneurial reasons, they also do this because of the structural barriers they face as Roma – marginalisation and discrimination and their inability to live well, at peace, or ‘normally’ in their native places in Bulgaria.

There have been a number of positive consequences of migration. Many of the informants demonstrated improved social status, building of social, network and human capital, a greater perception of optimism for their future, greater freedom, well-being and ‘success’ abroad. Their satisfaction with life, as a whole, has been positive as a result of their migrations. Not all migratory experiences have been positive, however. A number of migrants have expressed and demonstrated their frustrations with having no other option but to leave beloved family members, relatives, and homes in order to earn money abroad or to “survive” (a word which was preferred by the informants themselves). Abroad, they find themselves primarily occupied with strenuous work, with monotonous and boring lives, and emotionally strained due to the lack of healthy social lives abroad.

All these factors and processes therefore should be studied as a prelude to the following chapter which will discuss the concepts of belonging and space. Even though the majority of the informants for this research felt Bulgaria to be the place they genuinely belong to, they began to consider their futures abroad.

Chapter 5 Belonging and Space

5.1. Introduction

The chapter aims to continue the discussion of the previous chapter and more precisely shed more light of what follows as the consequences of migrations by Bulgarian Roma. More precisely, it seeks greater insights into the emerging feelings of belonging and attachment by migrants who find themselves abroad for various reasons. This chapter begins by picking on the last section of the earlier Migration Chapter and its 'Negative sides and experiences as a result of Migration'. Here, more examples of such experiences will be uncovered to show a positive relationship between negative experiences abroad and increased feelings of attachment to the home places of migrants.

This also closely relates to the discussion of belonging for migrants who discern a clear demarcation between home ("desh") and foreign contexts ("bidesh") (Gardner, 1993). While the former remains the space in which migrants strongly associate themselves and draw their spiritual and emotional strengths, the latter is the space which provides vital economic incentives. As a result, we can see the existence of two main scenarios in this discussion of belonging and space. One is the existence of a clear division between home and the foreign context due to the need to earn money and also strong feelings of attachment to Bulgaria due to patriotic feelings which strongly draw some of the interlocutors to their homeland. The other scenario is a more fluid one and fits well with a discussion of transnational feelings of belonging and simultaneity. Here, there is interplay between the concepts of 'home' and the foreign context that become blurred. Major factors which seem to inform such transnational feelings of belonging are the availability of 'network capital' which facilitates Roma migrations, the availability of family, kin and friends abroad, access to information and familiarity of the ways of the hosts, but also, importantly, the migrants children (who play a strong factor in determining Roma migrants' feelings of belonging).

What makes this discussion poignant, furthermore, is the observed propensity of informants to stay together as a group, both at times when they face negative treatment abroad as migrants and when they are able to enjoy relative stability and feel well abroad. This could be explained by the similar way many find themselves abroad originally – through the heavy reliance on family and friends abroad – and this also explains the feelings of belonging many informants have towards their particular Roma groups.

This chapter notably discusses Roma migrants' feelings of belonging related to the concepts of *desh* and *bidesh*, network capital and simultaneity.

5.2. Belonging to Bulgaria; clear demarcations between “desh” and “bidesh”

Most informants within this study identified strongly with Bulgaria. They felt they belong to Bulgaria and they exclusively claimed it as their own and as an intrinsic part of their identities. Thus, some respondents expressed a deep attachment towards Bulgaria, regardless of the harsh life they may have there. This could be explained by the fact that they are deeply attached to being in Bulgaria due to its specific and peculiar characteristics. A second impetus for the Romani respondents' feelings of attachment to Bulgaria was due to negative experiences abroad. Unsurprisingly, on occasions when they experienced downward social mobility abroad, compared to Bulgaria, they did not recommend migrating unless a person really needed to. As Gadner (1993, pp.1-2) has argued, there are different types of belonging and an interplay between what she has called “*desh* and *bidesh*”. While the former is the place which nurtures the spiritual belonging and identities of an individual, the latter is identified as the source of financial/economic and political incentives and power. In some instances, Roma migrants prefer to be in Bulgaria and do not wish to be away from their homeland. The following section unveils statements regarding these ideas collected from the field.

5.2.1. Patriotism

A number of the informants identified Bulgaria as their sole place of belonging, while travelling abroad has merely been a necessity. This they explained was often

due to a sense of 'patriotic' feelings towards Bulgaria and their own specific places of origin. They demonstrated a form of attachment to Bulgaria as a country itself due to its cherished characteristics. This group of interlocutors demonstrated an appreciation of the country itself, and regardless of the harshness they may experience in Bulgaria, they still consider it as their true place of belonging. This form of belonging relates closely to Gardner's (1993) concept of "desh" (home) or the spiritual source of true belonging. For this group of people, being abroad appears to be being in places which provide vital sources of income and thus 'survival', as these are the spaces which sustain their essential economic and basic needs.

"But the most important [question] is why did I cry when I crossed the border away [from Bulgaria]? It is because I am a patriot. I love Bulgaria even though it is hard. Truly, it is hard to progress here and to work; you know, to pay your bills, to look after your family." (Informant 74, female, 30s, Stara Zagora)

Informant 74 initiated our conversation herself with an explanation and an emphasis on why she had moved away from Bulgaria. As the quote clearly points out, her migrations abroad were only intended to earn a living and provide for her family. Nevertheless, she feels strongly attached to Bulgaria as a country, regardless of the hardships she faced there. The concept of the foreign land being a source of income and survival for Respondent 74, or "bidesh", is well-emphasised, while Bulgaria continues to be the true place of her belonging, or "desh", to which she is so strongly attached.

Informant 41 from Montana had worked in Germany, Spain and the Netherlands. Holding a university degree and working as an educator she was able to appreciate the benefits (and shortcomings) of being in a foreign country. Due to her travels abroad she was able to discover and learn from these Western states and appreciate their 'beautiful' natural characteristics, characters, the ways of life and what they had to offer. Nevertheless, these attractive and comparatively flamboyant features and the acknowledged easier life abroad were not enough to win her over. She continued to be highly attached to the nature of Bulgaria and its climate.

"...considering my life before and after... Before [going abroad] it seems I was more happy that I was in Bulgaria. After that, I started feeling a little less happy only because I had gained a basis of comparison. I noticed that for the first time

while I was in Spain.... [For example] I went into a pharmacy and when I saw there was not a single antibiotic medicine which did not cost more than 2 euro something, I felt very sad for Bulgaria – not for the Roma but for Bulgaria. Later, I saw this in Germany and in the Netherlands as well. In their shops there were goods for their standard. It is like you go into a shop and buy cheese for 5 ‘stoitinkas’ for example – according to their standard. [...]

But if I need to choose where to live I would say Bulgaria because I like nature very much. You see it is beautiful [abroad], however, when you touch it is prickly, hard - you cannot feel it... while I love to feel things. [talking about the weather] it stabs you and you wonder which part of your body to cover first. I like our nature, the greenery, our plants, our climate, the winter, the spring, the summer, and the autumn....” (Informant 41, female, 50s, Montana)

Respondent 41 is seemingly convinced that she wants to be and stay in Bulgaria. In her narrative, she starts with an account of the more affordable and easier life abroad. She has been able to work out the buying power of an average salary and the things a working person could afford with it. Informant 41 has as a result been deeply saddened by her striking discovery, based on her experiences in Germany and the Netherlands - that life can be much more bearable, easier and enjoyable away from Bulgaria. Probably, that is exactly why she distinguishes her life now as composed of two indispensable periods – “before” she has left abroad and the period “after” after that. These observations and experiences abroad have made her understand and have convinced her that life abroad is different than what she used to know and that is why she is saddened not only about the Roma (the group of people she knows well herself and who face hard financial burdens and therefore challenges in life) but also Bulgarians at large. Nevertheless, this more affordable and ‘luxurious’ life abroad is not “felt” and internalised for Informant 41. Her feelings are already captivated and these belong to Bulgaria. In her native country, she is used to the nature, plants and everything else such as the seasons which she feels close to and are ‘hers’.

By the same token, and in this line of thought, Respondent 52 has been living and working away from Bulgaria for more than 12 years. Even though she is not on her own, having helped other members of her family and in-laws to come and join her abroad and settle down, she continues to be convinced her place of true belonging is Bulgaria. It is not only her native Stara Zagora, but Bulgaria as a whole that she misses ceaselessly. Respondent 52’s great passion had been fishing and just being in the natural surroundings of Bulgaria. Even though she has spent considerable years in Spain and Germany and more recently in Austria, Informant 52 continues to feel

that being abroad brings her an income, something so vital and necessary for her and the sustainability of her family. The foreign context is thus solely a source of income, or 'bidesh', while her true sense of belonging, 'desh', continues to be Bulgaria.

[In reply to a question of what she perceives she loses while abroad]

"Yes, I am losing, I am losing ... I love Bulgaria. I am longing for Bulgaria. I love my country... I cannot be without Bulgaria. I have grown up there; it is not only because of my parents. I cannot be without Bulgaria. No matter what Bulgaria is like – even if they chase me away, even if they beat me... Bulgaria remains my country. I love it with my whole heart and soul.

Yes. I wander around [the world] and at one point come back [to Bulgaria] because I cannot be without Bulgaria. A lot of money has passed through my hands; there were a lot of marriages here [in Austria]; a lot of rich people of various kinds [I have been working for]; [...] I gave up everything! I could have stayed in Spain and become settled. When the Berlin wall was being torn down, I was on the opposite side. They told me to migrate there. I didn't want to because of Bulgaria. So, I have loved Bulgaria for a long time! I love her so much! It is because of Bulgaria that I have missed so many apartments; an elderly woman wanted me to take care of her; she could give her apartment to me so long as I take care of her... 'I don't want [anything]! – not your apartments, not your heads; [there is] nothing, nothing, nothing I want!'; I am healthy and I am alive. I will work and that is it.

To tell you the truth, I don't take anything [as souvenirs] from Bulgaria because I know I will come back. Not even pictures. I don't even take pictures... because they make me sad; because I know I will come back; because there is no point in this – taking a lot of things as if I am not coming back... I don't take anything. I leave [Bulgaria] with [just] one bag! My passport is in my hands – 'good bye Bulgaria, and wait for me while I get money'!" (Informant 52, female, late 40s, Stara Zagora)

The narrative of Informant 52 demonstrates a strong sense of belonging and attachment towards Bulgaria. The luxury and attractive features of life abroad are not enough to win Informant 52 over in order for her to start considering any place, different from Bulgaria, as her second home or to incite feelings of belonging. Even though she has been able to be surrounded with relatives, members of her family and other Roma and close friends abroad, she still feels she belongs to Bulgaria and nowhere else. Even, being fluent in Spanish, well-aware of the ways the foreign systems work, and able to exercise her hobbies and passion (fishing) abroad, she remains a fervent Bulgarian for all these years. From the above cited passages one could discern a clear demarcation between Bulgaria and abroad, where the former is seen as a place which feeds someone's identity while the latter contributes towards migrants' economic and financial needs. Thus, it seems Bulgaria, as a nation-state,

continues to be the major source for the identification of Roma; it continues to play a role as the source of spiritual power and identification and therefore it remains their place of belonging.

The section above showed examples highlighting that some Roma respondents have strong feelings towards Bulgaria. It also demonstrated the need and obligation to migrate – as one of the few options left for Roma to financially secure themselves and their families. This strong sense of belonging to Bulgaria and the need to travel abroad comes as a counter argument to widespread beliefs about the inherently mobile nature of the Roma people. Regardless of appreciating the positive sides of being abroad, the ‘better’ lifestyles they could have away from Bulgaria, most still prefer to stay and spend the rest of their lives in their native places, regarded as their true homes. Their feelings of spiritual attachment towards their homeland are so strong that there are few prospects for them to replace them with another country. Yet, besides guarding strong ‘patriotic’ feelings towards Bulgaria, there may be other influential factors which can tip the scales in favour of Bulgaria. The following section highlights further reasons for informants’ strong attachment to Bulgaria.

5.2.2. Unfavourable treatment abroad and belonging

Feelings of attachment to Bulgaria were further expressed in the cases when respondents have had negative experiences abroad. In cases when migrants were treated unfavourably, with lack of respect and in ways which undermine their human dignity, unsurprisingly, Roma migrants started to develop distaste towards some foreign places. Thus, they felt they would not want to spend any more time than necessary away from Bulgaria. Furthermore, the amount and nature of their work abroad and the lack of healthy social contacts and lifestyle provided reasons to Roma migrants to feel more deeply attached towards their native Bulgaria and feel resentment towards the foreign countries.

“You start asking yourself why I had to get educated so that I come here. The thing which I do there [abroad], I can do without education. You are required to be a donkey, an ox... nothing else. [Employers abroad] don’t care what is in your head – you simply do not feel comfortable and that is why I don’t want to be there. [...]

Holiday or not you have gone abroad to work - full stop! We cannot gain that right, which hurts me personally. And maybe that is why most of all I came back in Bulgaria –because I don't like people's attitude towards us. They don't consider you as equal with them. For them, you are a nonentity (нищожещо) who works for miserable money (мижави пари) which if they were paid this they would probably die of hunger; they cannot imagine how they would live with this money there. So, you are a white slave – simply and solely you work and nothing else. They don't care at all whether you are ill or healthy. They want only work from you and nothing else. They don't respect your human rights at all.

[...] As I am telling you, I don't like their way of life. Maybe, if their attitude towards us was different and if they accepted us as equals I would not mind being there, I don't know.

Purely financially, yes, you earn enough money. There is no way you can stay without money; you pay your bills and also you save something. However, I prefer to live 11 months well and a month poor. Because there it is so – you are saving and not spending for 11 months to come back for a month and pretend to be a big shot – as most of them do and they think they are great.” (Informant 38, male, 30s, Montana)

The narrative of Respondent 38 is clearly indicative of spaces only unusually occupied by Roma migrants, save for a specific reason – earning money. Firstly, his experience abroad resulted in downward social mobility. As a migrant seeking to make ends meet, he found himself in an unfamiliar environment, but with other migrants who had a much lower educational level, qualifications and social status. Having a higher degree in arts and directing, he felt uncomfortable and downgraded to co-exist and work with people of a much lower educational level. Secondly, he was not happy to perform jobs which just any person, regardless of their educational or intelligence level, could do. Even though he had been trying hard to find a placement in his area of expertise – directing theatre plays and as an actor in puppet theatre – the jobs he could do as a migrant in Belgium were low-skilled or unskilled. Thirdly, the treatment he received as a worker abroad were demeaning and humiliating for Informant 38. The words he used to describe the salaries he and his counterparts received abroad (мижави) included little, petty and insignificant. He was aware that such a miserable salary would be unacceptable to locals as it would be insufficient to sustain their living standards. Nevertheless, Informant 38 and his Bulgarian colleagues were determined to save their earnings abroad by whatever means so that they could enjoy life for a little while (about a month) in their home places. And finally, the way of life abroad and the culture of the people there are acknowledged as different and alien compared to Bulgaria. He misses the social aspects of life in Bulgaria where family members, relatives and friends are close-

knit, pay each other visits and are close to each other. The perceived 'uncordial' or cool behaviour of those in the West is something which he does not like or agree with. Thus, he would not prefer to live abroad, as he is used to being in a close and hearty social space where people can pay each other visits without special invitations and/or too much preparation. As this almost self-evident quote suggests, Roma migrants can find themselves in spaces abroad which do not fit the life-styles they prefer. That is why their Bulgarian home-places remain the ones they identify with - they prefer to spend their free time there and spend their savings from abroad even though only for a little while (while projecting a distorted image of their ways of life or social level abroad).

Migration of Bulgarian Roma was commonplace among all ages. Thus, even capable youths take an active role by travelling and earning abroad. As seen earlier, younger Roma have realised that they have a form of 'obligation' to take an active part in earning due to their greater working potential and also because they know that finding a job as age increases becomes a challenge. The life abroad for the immigrant youths, however, may be challenging as it does not necessarily meet their ideals and preferences. As they migrate abroad in order to earn money, they find themselves in spaces where they are predominantly occupied with work. In some cases, such monotony becomes unbearable for Roma youngsters and why they prefer to be in Bulgaria. There were boys who shared that while they were abroad, they were mentally in Bulgaria, thinking about their friends and enjoyable times. They sometimes shared they felt they may be losing their close connections with friends. They frequented local bars and discos and make contact with local girls, but sometimes their inability to speak the host language, and the avoidance of confrontation with possessive locals, made them often think about their home places. While abroad, a number of Roma respondents have felt their lives are monotonous, occupied with hard and boring work and with less free and available time for socialising. Thus, they felt they prefer to be in places where they could have more meaningful lives characterised with time for leisure activities, hobbies and interests.

Respondent 21 has spent the majority of his life in Tel Aviv, Israel, with his family and some relatives. Even though he has been raised there and has been going back to

Bulgaria for limited periods, he is strongly attached to his Roma community in Sofia. He shares his feelings of belonging towards the mahala in Sofia:

“I don’t want to live there [in Israel]. My father wants to live there; he does not want to come back. [...] There is nothing I can do there. [...] I don’t [plan] to stay there for more than five years. I have had enough [installing/hanging up] drywalls. There is [plenty of] work!

While I am here I do not think about there [Tel Aviv]. [...] But when I am there, it is a bit dull.” (Informant 21, male, 20s, Sofia)

Respondent 21 prefers to be in Sofia, and more precisely in the Roma mahala, being surrounded by friends and relatives. He finds his life more enjoyable in his community in Sofia as he has more time for amusement, outings with friends and he feels he enjoys his life more there. His parents, however, want to spend the rest of their lives in Israel, as their interests differ. They have been able to appreciate their life in Israel and thus do not express any inclination to return.

“There [in Italy] you may feel a little bit better because you are working and you pay for anything you want. But saving money is something fake there. Because you work in the rain and you compromise your health. However, because of the money and because of the pleasure, you do it – you earn.

There are more interesting things [abroad] than here, though you have gone there to work, not to take walks.

[...] the problem is that they are in their own country and you are a third hand [third class person] for them – you have gone there to make a slave of yourself for them (отишал си там да робуваш за тях).

[...]Wherever they call you – you go and work. You may not [be qualified for your job] but you work - I am not a chauffeur but there I was learning to operate a tractor; I cannot drive a car, but there I was operating a tractor. Necessity teaches you everything.

Interviewer – “What is it that you liked there the most? Is there anything which you liked?”

“To tell you the truth, I don’t like anything there.

[...]Yes, you lose. You are there in a closed circle. You lose a lot from your reality [the reality of life].

I know that I am going to hell. It is a place where I will not be very amused [I will not be having a good time].

Yes, it is not good for you (не ти действа добре²⁰).” (Respondent 55, male, 20s, Stara Zagora)

²⁰ Another more literal translation could be – it does not agree well with you.

The daily social life abroad of a migrant labourer can prove to be unbearable, harsh and unwelcoming. Very interesting is the analogy of 'heaven' and 'hell', which have been used by several of the respondents in this study. Foreign spaces and the life they offer have been described as desirable and splendid due to the opportunities they offer to those from Bulgaria. In these cases an emerging description was with words such as 'heaven/paradise'. Conversely, the experiences abroad could be equally be undesirable and loathsome. It is clear that Roma migrants agreed to put up with working and being in such 'hellish' places due to lack of alternatives to earn a living. Informant 55 did not wish to migrate back to Calabria, Italy, nor would he recommend this. His personal experience has proved to him that the life of a migrant abroad is a burden and a farce. It is perceived as an illusion as one could gain financial benefits but at the expense of everything else – health, dignity, freedom and losing a grip of the reality of life (or the idea of what is life about). The life choices of these informants become hard and complex – they set off on journeys abroad as that is the only way they could meet their most basic needs, such as to afford food, clothes and paying their bills. Abroad, however, they are faced with trading their labour, health and dignity for the much needed economic benefits. In such cases the sense of belonging continues to be to their Bulgarian places of origin, where at least they are spared from strenuous labour and compromised freedom and dignity.

Often, Romani migrants were eager to relate their unfair and inhumane experiences as workers abroad. The narrative of Romani migrants being treated inhumanely and as 'slaves', as they often chose to describe it, would suggest their experiences abroad have been quite unpleasant.. Thus, they felt they should put up with the hardships they face solely because of money. Their feelings of belonging thus continue to be towards their home-spaces in Bulgaria.

"I liked [Greece] but I did not like the behaviour of the Greeks because there were constantly problematic. [...] They pick on you without any reasons – you just pass by and they can hit you for no reason – and say to you 'Gamoto bulgaro cigano!' – 'Fucking Bulgarian Gypsy'. You [in turn] cannot do anything! You are mad but you stay quiet; at the end of the day, you are in their country...

The faster you work they urge you to work even faster. When you finish your job they want you to do more. When you finish your job at say 4pm the boss takes you to his brother's garden to pick olives. They [the gardens we are supposed to work on] are supposed to number two-three but turn out to be 10. It

gets 8:30-9:00 pm. I say to him 'Wait, for 25 euro, tell us what you want us to do'. He says, 'If you don't do it, take the road on foot', while this place is 80-90 km away from the town, 'hit the road and you won't see any money, nothing! Go home!'

So, if you want it or not, you do the job. You are a slave there! That is all!

[...] No, I don't miss anything! I don't even want to hear anything from Greece." (Informant 59, male, 20s, Stara Zagora)

Following below is a similar account of Informant 58 from Stara Zagora who relates about his migrant experience in Greece.

"They [Greeks] don't have this culture and upbringing; they don't treat you humanely. They consider you not even as a worker because workers have respect of some kind – it is like a slave. They exploit you as much as it is possible... how can I say it? – Till it is barely possible!

We were trying to be with people only from Bulgaria; not to be well dispersed because there were youths who were passing by, how do you call it – rockers [skinheads]... they were passing around and creating problems when they found out we were Bulgarians.

[...] They won't pay you extra [for the additional work you do]. They take advantage of you in all ways possible. They simply maltreat you anyhow they want because they know you depend on them." (Respondent 58, male, 50s, Stara Zagora)

Seemingly, negative and 'bad' experiences abroad act as repellents which make informants feel resentful and detached from the host places (which are the sources of vital economic gains), while native Bulgaria remains as the place of their belonging. Examples in support of the narrative of negative experiences are manifold. However, one of consequences of overworking abroad, unsurprisingly, is the occurrence of health issues and problems. As a result, a number of Romani migrants had to cease working abroad and seek health treatment in their home country. In such cases, they had to stay in Bulgaria due to their inability to work abroad, but also some have resented the fact that they have ruined their health abroad. In other cases, migrants had become so sick that they could not afford to travel anymore away from Bulgaria. Their choice to stay in Bulgaria in order to receive medical treatment reinforces the feelings of belonging towards the Bulgarian space. It is a symbolic space which always remains available for the Roma migrants – in this case it is a place which offers vital recuperation, retreat and escape from a hostile world.

“When I went to Portugal [for the first time, I was very strong]. Work has worn me out now. Do you know in what heat I have been working? At 59 degrees! Do you know what 59 degrees feels like? Have you been in sauna? Inside the greenhouse in the month of August! Yes, I have been planting. My whole body was shaking because of the heat.

At 10 AM we stopped for ten minutes to have lunch – you eat a sandwich and that is it. We were bringing deep frozen water so that it can melt a little bit [during the day]. You take a sip and again [carry on working], so that you can have cold water for 8 hours. That is it! It is complete pain/agony....” (Informant 34, female, 50s, Montana)

“[Yes], we lose! We lose our health and our years – far from our kids and relatives....” (Respondent 64, male, 40s, Stara Zaroga)

In summary, there were a number of informants who were eager to share their negative experiences from their travels abroad. Due to these unpleasant experiences abroad, as this section demonstrated, Roma migrants came to strongly dislike the foreign spaces and the host population. They did not hesitate to give sharp descriptions of the locals, such as “bastards”, “a dirty nation”, or “insidious and harsh”. In cases when migrants faced degrading conditions, lack of respect as human beings, and when they had no other options but to work unconditionally, Roma migrants began to detest these new environments abroad. As migrants set off with the initial idea to earn money, they stayed abroad and put up with unexpected, and often surprising, working conditions and treatment from employers and locals in order to earn. Even though some informants found themselves spending years working abroad, they continued to think about other, more pleasant and favourable, places with better lives. In such cases, they prefer Bulgaria, as it turns out to be a more favourable space, but also may still consider other foreign destinations which might offer better lives and experiences.

5.3. ‘Network capital’, family ties and belonging

The availability of network capital of Roma migrants can determine how they feel in a certain place and their perceptions of ‘feeling at home’. As seen in the Literature Review, Elliot and Urry (2010) consider “network capital” as all the elements which enable individuals to lead highly mobile ways of life. Therefore, factors such as possession of documents, visas, money, qualifications, family, relatives and friends, the ability to speak languages, walk or carry luggage, communication devices and

access to information, etc., can be seen as “network capital”. The availability or lack of such factors can arguably determine a migrant’s feelings and perceptions of comfort abroad and ‘home’. Thus, migrants with good network capital could feel comfortable anywhere in the world and consider various places as ‘home’ at the same time. Conversely, the lack of its availability for a Roma migrant can result in their uncomfortable feelings about new and foreign settings. In the latter scenario, migrants might decide to cling to certain practices, such as observation of traditions and customs and refrain from fully involving themselves in the activities of the foreign environment.

As seen in the previous chapter, one of the clear consequences of the migratory experiences of Bulgarian Roma is building social and network capital. Thus, they were able to learn new languages and master new skills which help them to better adapt to the foreign environment. Yet the feelings of belonging which emerge among the Roma interlocutors are intricate and convoluted. This is because, on the one hand, they may develop a transnational sense of belonging (which can depend and is determined by the availability of network capital and family ties abroad). On the other hand, this emerging ‘transnational sense of belonging’, it seems, does not challenge their feelings of belonging towards their internal groups. Therefore, they still maintain a form of internal boundary maintenance.

5.3.1. ‘Transnational’ sense of belonging

Firstly, the availability of network capital appears to be a decisive factor for the decision of Roma migrants to move away from Bulgaria. It also appears that its lack impedes proper inclusion into the host society. One of the most cited factors which informants gave in their decisions to go abroad was social contacts abroad. More precisely, these are family and relatives who are relied upon, especially when Roma migrants go to a foreign country for the first time. Thus, availability of family, friends, neighbours or acquaintances abroad appeared to be one of the decisive factors for Bulgarian Roma migrants’ decisions to travel abroad. Almost unanimously, informants identified the crucial need to have family or other contacts abroad prior to their migrations to any destination. These could provide some basic accommodation and references so that they can start a job. The lack of such networks

is perceived as undesirable and has appeared sufficient to deter, in the majority of the cases, the decision of Bulgarian Roma to consider going to another foreign country.

“Well, there were the relatives of my wife who welcomed me. You know, there you cannot go just like this. Otherwise, it is much harder. You can still get sorted but it is much harder. There were people who came and slept on the streets – misery, it’s not good. There must be someone there to welcome you until you find a job ... and [then] you will be fine.” (Informant 70, male, early 20s, Stara Zagora)

Informant 70, in the quote above, has recognised that starting from scratch and without the help of family, relatives or friends is certainly possible, however, not desirable or a good idea. This is supported by what is related by another Roma migrant: “It is not that I chose the Netherlands, however a cousin of mine went there. He came back, [then] he invited us and that is how things got started. I did not choose the Netherlands.” (Informant 33, male, 50s, Montana).

In reference to the ‘Rhyzomatic’ type of migration, discussed in the previous section, a major part of this study’s respondents have made it clear that they did/do not have a specific or fixed preference for a destination for travel abroad. A major part of them demonstrated a non-individual approach to migration but one which was determined and depended on the availability of connections and ties. The reason Respondent 33 has went to Holland, for example, has been solely due to the availability of certain family contact that he could go to. The role of connections and ties abroad was appreciated by many of informants as key for moving abroad. Thus, they may choose to migrate and settle down with relatives and friends in more than one destination and feel relatively ‘at home’ there due to the established and functioning relations there. This can create a transnational sense of belonging and can be determined by the availability of ‘network capital’, such as family relations, friends, and access to information.

5.3.2. Feelings of belonging towards a specific internal group

There seems to be a type of a chain migration which informants follow abroad and this could be to more than one destination. This can explain why there is a considerable presence of Roma from Montana in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and in

Ghent, Belgium and a considerable presence of Roma from Stara Zagora in Poland and the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, there is a second dimension of belonging and this time revolves around the specific region or the Roma group they feel they belong to. "We were originally in the Czech Republic. Our people made us go there." (Informant 66, female, 60s, Stara Zagora).

Informant 66 demonstrates the fact that Czech Republic is a favoured destination for Roma from Stara Zagora but also it shows the allegiance the informant pay towards the group she belongs to – "our people made us go there". "Our people" here can refer to her family and friends and also the predominant part Roma from Stara Zagora.

Following below is a very similar account of Informant 30 which indicates the reason for the preferred destination of Rotterdam for Roma from the mahala in Montana.

"We are mostly in Rotterdam. My brother (went first) and then I went (after him)."

Interviewer - "You mean to say that they were one of the first, is that right?"

[Two people answering in unison] – "Yes. It was my brother, then I went after him; after that it was this one and that one [pointing towards people sitting at our table], family... friends and we all pulled each other abroad.

...later... you want to talk to [gives a name] – he is my first cousin. Later his wife and his son came as well. Then, in turn, they brought their brothers/sons-in-law, other in-laws... we have female cousins whom we brought... that is how it is. Almost all [of them in] the mahala are our relatives." (Informant 30, male, 50, Montana)

Today, the majority of Roma residents in Rotterdam, as the informants have already explained to me, are from Montana. The pioneer who went there first was a resident from the Ogosta Roma neighbourhood, in Montana who has been able to find and pave the way for his family and kin. Eventually, one by one they have been able to help their members of family and, gradually, Rotterdam has become the home of a significant number of Roma from Montana. According to some of the narratives of the interlocutors, Rotterdam has become a 'home' space as it resembles the 'home' space in Montana due to familiarity of persons, behaviour, speech and music.

“Otherwise, ours go towards countries in which they could survive easier – for example Rotterdam. I was there before [naming another informant]. What can I say– you go and on every corner there are Cigani. Here Cigani, there Cigani – everywhere. It is as if you are in the mahala.... It is as if our whole mahala is there.” (36, male, early 50s, Montana)

Informants 30 and 36 both emphasise the great number of Roma from the neighbourhood in Montana in Rotterdam. Informant 36 uses the word ‘ours’²¹ pertaining to a particular sense of belonging which is attached to the Roma neighbourhood where he is from. Thus, in relation to the literature of Roma identity, and more precisely the feeling of belonging to the particular sub-group of Roma, he emphasises the importance of the discussion about his own group. Even more, he points towards the already established Roma community in Rotterdam. For him, walking particular streets in Rotterdam and frequenting certain places brings him to encounter the same familiar faces from his Roma community in Bulgaria. It also reminds him very much about his own Roma mahala in Montana.

As argued already, this could be explained by the ways Roma find themselves abroad – through the help of close family, relatives, and friends. Often, if a person does not have a close relative abroad who they could count on for help, Roma residents actively seek to build connections with those in the mahala who have been or are abroad. A good supporting example was the instance of a young boy who passed by on his bicycle shouted out towards Informant 29: “You won’t forget me, right?”

The young boy contacted Respondent 29, who has been living and working in Germany along with his family for six and a half years. Prior to settling down there, however, he had been in the Netherlands and Italy, trying to earn a living. Due to the fruitful soil he was able to find in Wildeshausen, north-west Germany, working in a meat factory, he is now there with his family and close friends from his Romani neighbourhood in Montana. While being abroad they certainly can rely on each other at times of stressful (financial) situations, in everyday matters and also in

²¹ “Ours” is a translation of „нашите“, which can also be translated as ‘that/these which belong to us’. It brings a heavy connotation of belonging in its meaning.

extraordinary circumstances. This can further be indicative of the feeling of belonging towards their specific Roma group:

Interviewer – “Do you all live together with all the Roma?”

“Yes, yes, we are all together, because we are all friends from here. We were one company here and we left one company there.”

Interviewer – “Do they continue to be your friends now?”

“Yes, particularly talking about *our* group (да, специално за назе дето говориме). Me, personally, I cannot complain in Germany. For example, we are talking about [naming his friends] – *our* boys that we all grew up together with. For example, God forbid, if you call them in the middle of the night – they get up and are on the front line. You can count on them, do you understand? Recently, we had a situation when the bastard [talking to somebody on our table], your neighbour, got drunk and bothered a Pomak; it was him – *our Ciganin*. At 3 AM [person X] called and said ‘come because they beat up [person Y]’. They got up – all of *ours* – and apartments... as one...” (Informant 29, male, 30s, Montana).

As noticed in the quotes from the informants above, who exclusively relate about “ours” and “our people” to signify a type of belonging and identification towards a particular group of Roma, Informant 29 also refers to “our group” when talking about his closest friends in Germany. What is particularly informative in the quote above, however, is that first of all, he incorporates a very particular group of Roma, which he refers to as “ours”, and secondly, he feels comfortable in that ‘new’ or ‘foreign’ space. The Roma group from Montana have managed to establish a close network in Weildeshousen, even though it is different from the one in their native Bulgaria. This relationship continues to function well-enough abroad and resembles their ‘old times’ spent together during leisure times and weekends, but also in cases of emergency. As we saw in the quote above, Respondent 29 referred again to “our Ciganin” when a fight, close to the time the interview took place, had broken out between a drunken Roma and a Pomak.²² Even though the act of aggression was negatively judged by the Roma group of friends from Montana, they felt it imperative to protect one of their friends from the same mahala in Montana, regardless of the fact that the Pomak is also a citizen of Bulgaria.

²² *Pomaks*, also known as Slavic Muslims, are Bulgarian-speaking Muslims who could be found in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Northern Greece, Turkey, Albania and Kosovo (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Furthermore, some Roma migrants abroad have realised that they can function independently enough, and in a way which would not necessarily suggest a full or thorough inclusion within the host society. One of the reasons is that they continue to maintain close knit relationships between one another and speak in their native Bulgarian and Romani (the dialects they usually speak in their native towns in Bulgaria), which makes them self-reliant. This, in turn, is not really an encouraging factor to learn to speak and master the German tongue. Some Roma migrants admit that the ways they speak the foreign language is broken and it may be improper; however, they make fun of themselves. One of the reasons they give for their failure to master the foreign language, as they have realised, is because they do not have much contact with the local Germans and exposure to the language, nor do they feel they are adequately immersed in the host environment.

“Probably I am talking like those Cigani [in Bulgaria] who say ‘come over me’ (‘ела на мене’) [instead of ‘come to me’]. I listen to [the way] my children [speak]. They study there and the way they speak German compared to the way we speak it – they are correcting us; there is nothing in common. [Informant 38 along with another migrant join in and explain that they don’t have much immediate and close contact with the locals while abroad]. No, for two-three years we are working with Germans. So, the person learns Bulgarian, while we cannot learn the German language. You must have learnt it the way our children are learning it; in writing as well....everything.” (Informant 29, male, 30s, Montana)

The narrative of Respondent 29 suggests that adult Roma continue to maintain a form of boundary between themselves and the German people. They are able to learn the German language but superficially and this is appreciated by the Roma themselves they do not speak it properly. Respondents admit they do not make enough effort and this could be explained by the relative self-reliance they can enjoy by being close to their Roma friends and community abroad. Quite to the contrary, due to their persistence in conversing in their own Bulgarian and Roma, Germans in contact with Roma migrants often themselves have to learn the language in order for them to communicate.

5.3.2.1. Choosing to maintain close relations with family and kin abroad

Staying close to Roma relatives and friends can be a great plus for the Roma migrant – it is especially beneficial for finding or having a place to stay, especially upon their initial arrival. As argued earlier, on the one hand, chain migration has an enormous role in the decisions of Roma migrants to travel and start living abroad. Remaining in close contact with their Roma families and friends, on the other hand, can be seen as an impediment for further integration and inclusion of Roma migrants into the host societies. Even though some informants may recognise these contacts as inhibiting and obstructing a better inclusion into the societies they are in, their decisions to stay close to and maintain their ethnic capital suggests that this is a conscious decision. Thus, a decision to stay close to their communities demonstrates a feeling of belonging towards their (particular) Roma groups.

“I tried to learn Dutch but it is hard because I had little contact with them. I have been working mainly with Bulgarians around me. Well, I have many relatives there. In fact, I went to [stay at] my relatives. I was trying to work with/around them and...It was hard for me to learn it because I don't have contact with them [the local Belgians] and you know – a language can [best] be learnt when you listen to it constantly.” (Respondent 38, male, 30, Montana)

Informant 38 has been living and working with his relatives in Ghent, Belgium, for several years, while his relatives have been there for more than a decade. Nevertheless, he has only been able to learn basic Flemish as the environment he has found himself does not encourage learning and speak Flemish properly and fluently. What is more, Informant 38 has been able to live a normal life while in Ghent without feeling the need to master the host language. Even though he has acquired a basic knowledge of Flemish he admits his personal encounters with locals has been insufficient. Instead, most time Informant 38 has spent abroad has been with his kin, which in turn has held him back from fully and properly engaging with the locals, and learning the language.

One of the reasons why Informant 38, along with other Roma groups abroad, feels like he does not have enough or full contact with the local Belgians is because he feels like he has to stay in close contact with his relatives abroad. It is hard to say whether his sense of belonging to either Bulgarian or Roma culture is fed by his lack

of social capital (which would encourage greater social contact with the locals) or rather that it is an intentional choice to stay in close contact with his ethnic group. Esser (2008) argued that people do not always act in predictable and rational ways, or according to their best interests. Even migrants who recognise the importance of fully integrating themselves into the host society do not always act in (predictable) ways, as there are certain institutional and cultural 'cores' which act as points of reference. The cultural and ethnic capital that they carry with themselves abroad brings Roma migrants to seek out what was earlier strongly described as 'ours', to stay with each other and cater to their interests. Similar to the emergence of a considerable Roma presence in Rotterdam, Holland, there is a considerable number and a diverse group of Roma from Bulgaria in Belgium. This, in turn, has resulted in the establishment of businesses, cultural centres and churches which make them feel 'at home' while abroad. Such 'homely' and comfortable feelings are borne due to the familiarity which is then enjoyed abroad. Some interlocutors shared the ease with which they could access and enjoy specific foods, cuisine, or drinks, which are typical of Bulgaria, as they become readily available. Thus, even though there may be greater benefits for the Roma to try hard to integrate themselves in the host societies as best as they could, Roma respondents have demonstrated they choose and prefer to stay in close relationships with their own (Roma) communities while abroad. Esser (2008) argues that the social actions of individuals look to fulfil their daily social needs, which are physical well-being and social approval. Individuals, therefore, need commodities and their social behaviour is seen as "chain of production in which lower level means are invested as input factors to produce higher level goal(s)" (Esser, 2008, p.316). As a consequence, the host society should provide the "design for group living" or the 'things which are worth striving for' which immigrants should arguably actively try to reach (Esser, 2008, p.316). A considerable number of Roma migrants, conversely, seem to gravitate towards the 'institutional cores' characteristic of their places of origin in Bulgaria and have expressed limited engagement with the host population. Thus, even though Roma migrants can appreciate the benefits of being, working and living abroad, many have demonstrated limited efforts to assimilate themselves into the host societies. Instead, many informants seem to have chosen to stay in close relationships with their Roma communities.

We can discern a three faceted belongings – transnational, regional and communal. The type of reality which has been studied, thus far, suggests that Roma migrants express an attachment to Bulgaria (as a region), to their (specific) ethnic Roma community (or their community) and also to the countries they occupy abroad (transnational). All these, in turn, play as reference points for their spiritual, cultural and ethnic belongings. This sense of multiple, simultaneous belonging could be also supported by the observed tendency of Roma to increasingly migrate abroad with their whole families. As they are able to spend some time abroad, establish themselves (originally independently) and discover the possibilities in the differences in their life-styles and standards of living, many seek to settle down abroad, as it is rationally more constructive for their own future and of their families.

“They are all with their whole families. Everybody leaves with their families. It is rare now that somebody goes off by themselves.” (38, male, 30, Montana)

It is not only that the Roma try their best to help their close families, their kin and friends, but also that they see there is the clear potential for them to live comfortable lives away from Bulgaria. They want to share their positive experiences from abroad with their family members and also pass them on to other Roma from the neighbourhood. On the other hand, as seen in the previous section, in cases when migrants experienced monotonous, boring lives abroad, along with cases of racism, discrimination and exclusion, they do not wish or advise others to go abroad but feel they belong to Bulgaria.

The ‘network capital’ which Roma migrants seem to enjoy and rely on the most thus far revolves around the availability of contacts abroad, such as family, relatives and friends and the availability of information (through word of mouth within the community). These seem to be key in their decisions to move away from Bulgaria as migrants. The possession of knowledge (of the language), qualifications or skills, on the other hand, are originally not considered as decisive in their initial decisions to migrate. Thus, one can see a heavy reliance on the family and Roma community prior to their initial migrations, but also for their existence abroad as migrants (as

they consciously decide to stay in close proximity and contact with them, even though this can hinder their prospects abroad).

This section examined when Bulgarian Roma felt they belong to Bulgaria, as well as the interplay between availability of network capital and feelings of belonging. The next section looks at the role of simultaneity and feelings of belonging.

5.4. Simultaneity and belonging

Authors such as Levitt and Schiller (2008), Castles and Miller (2003) and Bauman (2007) argue that the role of nation-states is waning due to forces of globalisation which break down their binding forces. Thus, as a result of a greatly globalised world, it is difficult nowadays for citizens and migrants to draw clear lines between 'here' and 'there'. Factors such as multiple-citizenship and nationalities, and the concept of "simultaneity" further point towards the challenges of firm feelings of belonging towards a certain place (Levitt and Schiller, 2008, p.182). As a result, there is no problem for persons to pay allegiance to both their countries of origin as well as their host countries, and not only should there be no contradiction between the host and original communities, but they should result in increased feelings of belonging and attachment, thus reinforcing each other.

There were many instances of multiple feelings of belonging expressed by the Roma informants for this study, which also supports the concept of "simultaneity". A number of informants spoke about the different ways they are attracted and attach themselves to particular places. Even though, for the major part of the respondents, Bulgaria remains a major place of identification and the place of attachment, host countries, in turn, also start to emerge as sources of attachment and belonging for Bulgarian Roma. Most of all, it appears that the factor which make respondents feel 'at home' and become attached to a particular place abroad, is familiarity. Feelings of familiarity can be seen as acting as points of reference for the Roma migrants, and could manifest itself in various forms, such as knowledge about the country, its infrastructure, services, opportunities, as well as familiarity with the culture of the host country, though the existence of relatives and friends in that environment is a primary pull factor or 'glue'. In addition to abroad being merely identified as a

source of economic survival (or “bidesh” (Gardner, 2008, pp.1-2), it becomes the place where Roma start the beginning of their new lives, characterised by new experiences, relationships, lifestyles and social status, and therefore familiarity with these (new) ways. Perhaps this explains the hesitance which informants often showed when they had to consider which space they would identify as ‘home’. Since research with recent Roma migrants from Bulgaria is relatively young, it is realised that this study can only outline, point out and speak about processes, rather than any other end results or finished products. This is also in tune with the changeability and flux inherent with processes of migration.

5.4.1. Familiarity, family and “simultaneity”

One of the first evident indicators which informs and influences feeling of belonging for Roma migrants is availability of family and relatives. As seen already, Bulgarian Roma migrants, after migrating (originally alone) and being able to establish themselves abroad, almost immediately seek to help other members of their family, friends and neighbours out, so that they could join each other abroad. This gives rise to the observed phenomenon where Roma have members of family both in Bulgaria and abroad. Having the latter appears to be a key when informing feelings of belonging. Thus, narratives were very often given which highlighted that family informs their sense of belonging. The availability of family members and relatives in a certain space appears to be the main factors which inform Roma migrants’ feelings of belonging. This was also given as a justifiable and sensible reason for migrants’ feelings of belonging towards a particular place. The concept of “simultaneity” is supported by this research due the ways in which informants demonstrated allegiance to more than one place at the same time. The presence of relatives and family in Bulgaria was given as a strong enough reason which informed their feelings of belonging to Bulgaria, while at the same time, the ways of life abroad which informants begin to enjoy, in addition to family and friends abroad, are the other factors which make them consider their ‘foreign’ spaces as their ‘homes.’

“Yes, I see it [as my home] there [in Germany], but it cannot be. Since *my people* are here [Bulgaria], therefore I ought to be here as well. Otherwise, I love staying in Germany. If there was a way, I would be staying there; I won't

be coming here [Bulgaria] at all. However, I will see later on..." (Informant 75, female, 40s, Stara Zagora)

The feelings of guilt and responsibility towards her family obliges Informant 75 to come back to her native Stara Zagora. The possessive term that she uses, similar to a number of other Roma informants, my people, is quite revealing. It is 'her' people that play as an extension of her own self. In this case, 'her' people, even though she didn't explicitly refer to them, happen to be her mother, son and sisters. This became evident as the interview took place in the backyard of the Informant and as she often gave references to her family there. The location of family and relatives thus can be seen as the one which indicates and determines feelings of attachment towards a particular place and a key to informing feelings of belonging. The possessive "my people", furthermore, can work on several levels. First of all, it refers to her family members; secondly, to her belonging to her particular Roma community (or Roma sub-group); thirdly, in belonging to a larger Roma population and finally to Bulgaria.

Interviewer – "Do you want now to go back home? [The Netherlands]"

"I am telling you, I feel like going but I am good here [in Montana] At home, my wife, my kids, my family, my father and mother. Extra![...]"

Interviewer – "Where do you see yourself in the near future?"

"There again."

Interviewer – "Do you feel it like your own home?"

"Not 100 per cent however, 90 per cent"

Interviewer – "However, it drives you back here?"

"Well, I am here [Bulgaria] with my mother, my father. I came back [here] for the first time with the kids. Since the time they were born we got together [as a whole family] for the first time. This has not happened to me before. It is good to be home and to be with your family. That is the best. It is because, at the end of the day, money, work or whatever – the family is in first place. When there is a homely cosiness everything is excellent. As long as there is life and health..." (Informant 39, male, 30s, Montana)

The internal struggle and the simultaneous feelings towards both his native community in Montana, but at the same time Rotterdam, is well-exemplified by the narrative of Informant 39. Clearly, as he has spent a considerable time in the Netherlands, Respondent 39 considers his place 'abroad' almost as a second home. Seemingly, it is his family and their house in their native Montana that makes him feel so comfortable in Bulgaria and brings him to express feelings of attachment and

belonging.

The concept of simultaneity can be further revealed by following the investments of Roma migrants. Following where migrants decide to invest their capital and choose to transfer goods and finances can be revealing as this can indicate their feeling of attachment and belonging. The family of Informant 39 from Montana have resided in Holland for about 12 years. During this, they were able to raise their social level which is deemed satisfactory reaching, as it allowed the family to buy property in their hometown and remodel their house to their liking. For the years they have spent abroad, however, they have been working hard and saving eagerly in order to meet their original or initial intentions, or 'dreams', which are to save up money and improve their lives in Bulgaria. After they were able to reach a satisfactory level in Bulgaria, however, they no longer see themselves living in their houses in Montana regardless of the fact that they can appreciate the sweet fruits of their labour abroad. The family of Informant 39 holds a realistic view that the near future will almost certainly be spent in Rotterdam, not only because of the greater incentives there but more so as their two children were born in the Netherlands. This obliges families to re-evaluate what would be in the best interests of their children and their future. The feelings of belonging are now beginning to face serious challenges as children born abroad have different citizenship (and probably retain dual-citizenship), and obtain their education from the host country. Thus, almost by default their 'home' social environments are the 'foreign' or different ones, not the Bulgarian. At the same time, they have houses, friends and relatives they visit in Bulgaria during vacations or breaks and also converse in Bulgarian (and Roma languages). Such scenarios portray the 'simultaneous' feelings of belonging which migrants and their children retain.

Also, the new space with which they are already at ease, makes them consider it as their second 'home'. Thus, family 39 resorted to the weighty decision to stay in the Netherlands and invest in their future there, while retaining their Roma identities and feelings of belonging towards that community by staying in touch with the Roma from Montana in the Netherlands and in their native Montana.

The feelings of struggle and internal torment are also expressed by Informant 22

from Sofia, who feels obliged pursue the best interests of his family and children, even though he is strongly attached to his native place in Sofia:

“I don’t believe that one day we will come back in Bulgaria. I don’t believe [this] because I doubt I will be able to bring my children in Bulgaria. There is nothing here which will bring them back. Wherever my kids are, that is where I am (and will be). Wherever my grandchildren are, that is where I am. We only delude/deceive ourselves that one day, as we are young now, we will come back to enjoy our elderly years. Yes, however, I won’t be feeling good away from my children and that is a fact....” (Informant 22, male, 40s, Sofia)

There are many close family members of Respondent 22 who still live in Sofia and he is quite attached to them. Family members who have continued to live in Sofia quite often happen to occupy his thoughts while he is in Munich and he feels very sad being away from them. His concerns and thoughts do not give him ease but rather even “suffocate” him, as he stated. Besides these cherished family members, he has also left his own family house empty, one which his departed father could not finish building. This has left Informant 22 and his brother with the legacy to finish the house in honour of their father. The fact that their late father has spent his life to build that house, now Informant 22 and his brother have feelings of remorse and even feel as “traitors” for not living and occupying the house. This example also adds another dimension to the narrative of belonging and it is linked with the feelings of responsibilities which migrants often have in their native places and which bring them back. These feelings seem to act as opposing forces which pull the migrant in opposite directions and contribute to their struggles and ‘simultaneous’ feelings of belonging. Thus, even though the family house of Informant 22 in Sofia is fairly empty, most of its furniture and goods have been delivered and continue bringing it at fairly regular intervals from Germany when the family returns to Bulgaria for their vacations.

“I will tell you a paradox. In the first two years, when the time was approaching for Bulgaria something was trembling inside me, I did not have patience. Even in the nights before we set off I could not sleep and it had happened so that I have never had enough sleep before we set off travelling [on our way to Sofia]. I try to lay down for a couple of hours, I cannot fall asleep - I get into the car and I set off. When I reached the Bulgarian border and when I read the big sign ‘Bulgaria’ a great burden came off my soul...

And now it is the opposite. As soon as I reach Austria, to civilisation, I feel I am entering my own waters and when I am in Germany already I lighten up; my soul is happy. I have no patience because I have home there as well; I have a

life there as well. I have settled down there. Truly, I feel splendid there regardless of the stress and the many bills....” (Informant 22, male, 40s, Sofia)

The narrative of Respondent 22 is another revealing example of the concept of multiple belonging and “simultaneity”. Furthermore, there is an indication of an internal struggle as for Informant 22 there are factors which make him consider both Bulgaria and Germany as equally dear to him. It is the beloved family members and the attachment to his house which keep Respondent 22 wanting to come back to Bulgaria. At the same time, he has become used to his way of living in Germany as well. He is certain that he will follow his children and grandchildren as this is what would make him truly happy.

Many respondents raised this internal struggle when speaking about feelings of belonging. Often, they justify their feelings of attachment to their Bulgarian home places because of missing their family members, and relatives, or ‘our people’ as they like to say, and also the houses they have. Nevertheless, as they spend increasing amounts of time abroad, a number of Romani interlocutors start to appreciate and really enjoy their foreign environments. This could be explained by their ability to settle down, find jobs and earn, which in turn raises their social status and results in greater feelings of satisfaction and fulfilment. All these, along with the emergence of new responsibilities, social relations, and friendships combine to challenge their feelings of attachment to Bulgaria.

5.5. Space-making

5.5.1. Encounters with Roma from other nation-states

The shared experiences of interlocutors revealed some other exciting insights regarding the spaces they occupy abroad. Foreign spaces turn out to be arenas where Roma migrants join and meet not only relatives and friends (of the same Roma subgroup) but also Roma from other regions in Bulgaria and other nation-states. This is a major turning point in the observations and experiences of many informants who come in direct contact with and share spaces such as work and housing for the first time. This can be seen as a relative novelty in the history of Roma in Europe which comes hand-in-hand with the EU guarantees and freedoms of travel, work and

residence and diminishing the relevance of national-state borders. These novel and unusual direct contacts between the Roma from different countries help to build first-hand observations and experiences about each other.

Almost all of the interlocutors of this study were able to voice opinions and observations about their encounters with 'other' Roma they came across abroad. Excerpts from informants from the three studied towns (Sofia, Montana and Stara Zagora) follow which support the argument that Roma migrants abroad find themselves in newer and bigger spaces, where they experience and learn about Roma from different countries. These result in the emergence of new, informative and sometimes striking 'know-how' which would hardly have materialised or become apparent if they did not embark on travels abroad.

"They are Cigani. It is the same thing as [here] with us [in Bulgaria]. The same mentality... except they are Spanish Cigani, they live in Spain and they don't speak Ciganski [Romani]. We, here, however, we know the Ciganski.

[The Spanish Roma] speak in a loud voice, they shout, and one could tell them by their clothes. There they also 'blab bla bla' in a loud manner [like us] [...] So it is the same thing like here, however, they don't know Ciganski, they speak Spanish" (Respondent 10, male, 40s, Sofia).

"They have nothing in common with our Roma – I don't want to [have anything in common with them]...at all. Yes, [I'm talking about] the Serbian Roma – Cigani. I do not accept them and I cannot accept them. Because, we all know why..." (Informant 45, female, 40s, Montana)

"In Italy I saw the so-called Serbian Roma. [...] So, what you see on television is exactly the same – the Serbian Ciganin is identical to how they were portrayed in the movie White Cat, Black Cat – the identity of the Serbian Ciganin – that is exactly the Serbian Ciganin..." (Informant 37, male, 50s, Montana)

"They are different to us [talking about the Roma from Romania he has met in Spain]. The difference is radical. The respect, [however] is normal. I mean, we respect each other and we speak. It is different [...] They are different to our Roma... Well, our Roma do labour, [we] work; not only from Stara Zagora, but all across Bulgaria; simply, [we] the Roma work for change, but there if the [Spanish] Roma start working, they get double or triple salaries. They don't go to work for 10 leva but 15.

Even the Spanish (Roma) youth do not talk Romski. They stopped speaking it.

They have preserved the singing and the dancing on the streets. They have Romsko²³ – big earrings, long hair...” (Informant 67, male, early 20s, Stara Zagora)

These examples were brought in order to demonstrate that Roma experience original encounters abroad. Almost all of the informants could relate to examples and experiences with ‘other’ Roma as they have had the chance to meet, intermingle and learn about each other. Thus, barriers between Roma could be built or eradicated based on first-hand experiences and encounters in new and vibrant spaces abroad.

In such cases, there are two major informative differentiations which ought to be made. One is on the basis of the national level – the coming into contact between Roma from different countries. For example, it became evident that Roma chose to differentiate between each other based on their countries of origin. For example, they spoke about the ‘Romanian’ Roma, the ‘Serbian’, ‘Polish’, ‘Greek’ or ‘Spanish’ Roma and that is how they chose to refer to them. This also goes the other way round and has been noticed by informants as well.

The example of Informant 22 from Sofia is a telling one. On one of his initial arrivals in Munich, Germany, he was able to find his first job through the help of Serbian Roma. As he stated, in 2002 when Bulgarians could not enjoy the rights and guarantees available to other EU citizens, Germans would hardly hire illegal immigrants. The way he could earn money was through the help of Serbian Roma who have spent a longer time as immigrants in Germany. The language they have been communicating in since then has been Romani, and yet they refer to each other as ‘the Bulgarians’ or the ‘Serbians’. Thus, we can discern an intricate interplay between a shared feeling of belonging towards a certain larger group belonging which is Roma, and yet, another belonging which is determined by the boundaries of nation-states. In this case, we could see the relevance of national belonging and the ways Roma may choose to differentiate between each other.

²³ ‘Romsko’ is also another way to refer to ‘Romanipe’ – that which Roma feel makes anybody a person and that which is shared between different Roma. It can also be referred as ‘Cigansko’

5.5.2. Encounters with 'other' Roma from Bulgaria

The second differentiation is on an intra-group level. Here, even though Roma from Bulgaria share the same national identity, they chose to differentiate between themselves based on the groups they feel they belong to and on their geographical locations in Bulgaria. Besides the often references of Turkish-speaking Roma abroad, there were of other groups which are from all parts of Bulgaria. Here, besides the use of the language dialect as a basis for differentiation, there are geographical and religious aspects which come to play and which act as separating or unifying factors between the groups.

"They count like this – 'Yek, dui, trin, atuz, eki, bezh' -'Hold on. What are you doing?' – [I ask them], -'That is how we count!' I have heard them, I have been arguing with them. [...] They say two-three Ciganski and two-three Turkish words. Like we mix Bulgarian." (Informant 36, male, early 50s, Montana)

The example of Respondent 36 demonstrates another genuine encounter between Roma from Montana and Roma from Shumen. While the former are predominantly Christian Orthodox (and of late Evangelical Protestant) and with a predominant Romani identity, the latter are Muslim and besides Bulgarian speak Turkish. This often adds another dimension to their identities, which is Turkish. The encounter which Informant 36 describes above is iconic as it shows the level of excitement and surprise as these Romani groups come together to live and work in a foreign space. Thus, the foreign space becomes a 'melting pot' which brings together groups which would not have come together otherwise or in Bulgaria.

"They are our Cigani, but I have not seen such [in Bulgaria]. [...] I saw such Cigani for the first time. They are from Bulgaria, however, they speak with an accent. I don't get them when they speak Ciganski. Well, they are different, they are not like us. So, I was scared of them; I was very scared of them. They used to beat their wives; and they were fighting about everything. And in the beginning I was very scared from them because they start arguing and so on...." (Informant 41, female, 40s, Montana)

This is yet another example of the excitement and surprise some Roma migrants experience as they come together and establish their first real contacts with Roma from other regions in Bulgaria. Here, even though they share the same ethnic Roma

identity and a feeling of belonging towards Bulgaria, these Roma groups diverge tangentially such as use of language dialects, ways of behaviour, and style of dress. This can also explain the trepidation and fear which Informant 41 used to have upon their first encounters in Spain while sharing a common space. Countries other than Bulgaria are able to bring various Roma groups together and this has been experienced by many of the interlocutors within this research. A telling narrative by Informant 15 from Sofia reveals differences:

“To tell you, they are from the villages [countryside], however, they are [abroad] for 10 years and they work there. They are Bulgarians – the women work in bars and restaurants, cafes... We were renting together – we were 3 families in an apartment. They were also Cigani, however, they were like Turks to tell you the truth – not like us Cigani. However, we understand each other talking in Ciganski. They speak Ciganski and you understand them.” (Informant 15, female, 40s, Sofia).

This illustrates the three levels of belonging which come to the fore – towards Bulgaria, towards a larger Roma group and at the same time towards their own internal sub-groups. As she explains, “They were also Cigani, however, [...] not like us”. This subtle differentiation draws certain invisible (conceptual) boundaries between the groups themselves, regardless of the fact that there are no other (physical) boundaries between these groups as they share a common space – an apartment abroad.

“Compared to Stara Zagora.... – they have better attitudes than us. They are more cordial.... Between themselves and between us. We speak in Ciganski, however, it is as if we from Stara Zagora are colder compared to them – they help you more and give you a hand. We, from Stara Zagora, will not hire this person, from Haskovo, those from the villages – I won't ask him to come and work; for example. However, they call us for work and give us a hand. That is the truth. Yes, they differ. They are much better than us in Stara Zagora. Attitudes are good and they will help you – they help you immediately. [...] We come across all kinds of Roma. From Plovdiv, Pazardzhik – simply, you feel a big difference. They will invite you into their places, will treat you to whatever they have, etc. you feel you are cordial (with them) as well – you welcome them – and you get along.” (Husband and Wife 64, 40s, Stara Zagora)

These informants from Stara Zagora offer yet another vivid example of the detailed knowledge and observations Romani migrants gather while abroad. Now, informants are able to choose and decide who they can trust while abroad and this can suggest the creation of divides or synergies between Roma individuals and/or groups. These

details make one understand that it would be hard to speak about 'the Roma' in general terms and also makes this research and its analysis poignant due to its sometimes provocative findings.

5.5.3. The 'nerve centres' abroad: Bringing Roma together

Another important factor which plays a role in the ways group feelings are born and maintained are public spaces such as places of worship and places of study. A great number of the informants shared the important role places of worship play in their lives. This is also in accord with a relatively recent phenomenon of evangelical conversions of Roma in many of the mahalas across Bulgaria. Thus, church going is continued as a practice which already exists in Bulgaria. For some others, however, going to church became a practice while they were abroad. There were narratives which gave examples of Roma pastors from Bulgaria who went abroad to preach and help Roma churchgoers abroad. For example, Informant 23 from Sofia spoke of the priest of her church in Rotterdam who came from the town of Shumen.²⁴

Besides differences of geography and the Romani dialect used, another major differentiation observed between the Roma groups is on the basis of religious affiliation. Interlocutors gave examples of the importance of religion and church-going plays in their lives, and there were many examples which suggested Roma migrants have created their own spaces where they could come together and practice their beliefs.

"In the church we used to frequent in the Netherlands, their pastor has attracted our Cigani in their church. After some time they got separated and started congregating in a place which used to be a café.... Our Cigani there imagined that the Dutch are so stupid and they had never found out that that audience is Ciganska." (Informant 37, female, 50s, Montana)

²⁴ A town situated in north-east Bulgaria. Shumen has appeared to be another town with a considerable Romani presence in Rotterdam. Many of the Roma in Shumen are considered as Turkish Roma due to their use of Turkish language, the Muslim religion and their Turkish identities. Thus, residents from Montana and Shumen appear to be most noticeable there (and also this can explain the competition between the residents from these two towns for special dominance in Rotterdam).

Informant 37 shared the importance of the church for many Roma migrants in Rotterdam. Her husband shared his great pride that the majority of Roma he knows have become religious:

“What makes me very happy is that everybody has turned towards God. Almost 90% of the people are Christians – they have accepted Jesus as saviour. I don’t know how this will be appreciated by others, however, for me that is a [source of] pride.” (Informant 37, male, 50s, Montana)

Church-going among Roma was observed by most informants. There were several examples of the creation of such spaces which brought together believers of the Protestant denomination abroad who are specifically from Bulgaria. In Vienna, many Bulgarian Roma have established a space where they can come together and worship as well as interact with each other as fellow-minded people:

“Yes, we have here a Ciganska church. [...] everybody is from Bulgaria.

Interviewer – Are these Bulgarian Cigani?

Yes, yes. “And they have made a church!” (Informant 6, female, 50s, Sofia)

Similar examples were brought by informants who travel to Italy and Poland as well:

“People get a garage or something of the sort and people gather together there.”

Interviewer – “Do they speak Italian?”

No, they speak Bulgarian. Only Bulgarians gather together.” (Informant 55, male, 20s, Stara Zagora).

“In Poland, there are two of our churches of this kind” (Informant 53, male, 50-60, Stara Zagora).

What is quite informative in this analysis is the observation that places of worship abroad become ‘hubs’, or ‘nerve centres’, which bring different Roma groups together. Thus, they have the chance to meet, get to know and learn more about each other for the first time.

“Interviewer – Do you have any contact with other Roma?”

We see them in the church because we are believers; we go to the church. How can I say ... I don’t know [...] I have some friends from Shumen, we know each other from the church.” (Informant 23, female, 20s, Sofia)

Other factors which come to the fore in creating feelings of belonging are common places for recreation (such as bars and discos), businesses (such as restaurants, supermarkets and food markets) and places for education (such as schools). Often, Roma from Bulgaria have no other option but to come into contact with each other as they frequent these common places. These physical encounters prove inevitable, even if Roma may try to maintain their internal boundaries due to their inherent differences and their sub-group peculiarities. These 'nerve-centres' abroad, then, are important as they offer elements which desired by a disparate range of Roma migrants.

As a result, it could be observed that these created spaces begin to resemble the 'neighbourhoods' or mahalas of Bulgaria, making many migrants feel comfortable and 'at home'. This is because they not only join relatives, but also enable meetings with acquaintances, friends, other Roma groups and people from Bulgaria. Furthermore, due to the ease with which goods and commodities can reach distant geographical points, informants related that they become able to enjoy easy access to things which sustain and nourish their spiritual needs, such as priests and musicians, but also elements which nourish their human needs, such as their favourite foods and familiar cuisine. These two strands are not to be seen as separate but as interlinked and interconnected. Certainly, one may encourage the other – e.g., listening to a favourite Romani band comes hand-in-hand with preferred cuisine and vice versa. This observed phenomenon, it could be argued, is one of the features inherent in today's more 'globalised world'.

Interlocutors gave many examples of the existence of such 'nerve centres' in Rotterdam, Gent and Warsaw. They related that these bring them to hardly imagine they are migrants away from their places of origin and they feel like they are still 'at home'. The examples below are excerpts from the narratives of informants in Rotterdam, Ghent, Cyprus, and Poland.

"The strange thing is that when I went there for the first time, the feeling that you are abroad [in Rotterdam] is diminished because there is no way you can go out into the neighbourhood [and] not hear Bulgarian speech. There are very many Bulgarians, not only from Montana [but] from Shumen, Turgovishte, Burgas, Pazardzhik, Aitos. When I go out, it feels as if I am in Montana – either

you will meet somebody from Montana or you will hear Bulgarians talking around you.” (Informant 39, female, 30s, Montana)

“If you ask me, there are moments when you are abroad you forget you are abroad because there is nothing you can miss - Bulgarian restaurants, Bulgarian shops, cafes, everything Bulgarian...I forgot to tell you that in Belgium, in Alterpen there was a boza²⁵ factory. 200 metres from my accommodation there was a place where they were making Bulgarian banichka²⁶ non-stop. So, there is nothing you can miss at a certain moment. You cannot say: ‘I feel like eating ‘lutenitsa’, or ‘banitsa’ – things which you can normally find only in Bulgaria; the community has already made everything. Shops with Bulgarian goods coming from Bulgaria. [...] That is why at certain times you simply forget you are abroad.” (Informant 38, male, 30s, Montana)

It must be also noted that a majority of the informants spoke of the considerable presence of Roma from Bulgaria rather than ethnic Bulgarians. They refer to themselves as Bulgarians since they come from Bulgaria and hold Bulgarian citizenships, though informants reveal that most of them are Roma and neighbourhoods abroad begin to resemble mahalas where they do what they would normally do in their places of birth, such as visiting places of worship, throwing weddings and starting up various businesses:

“Rotterdam is Ciganski. If you go to that designated area it is as if you are in the mahala. [...] [there] are three neighbourhoods... one after the other. There are thousands of cars from Shumen and Montana. From ours started doing weddings. They have weddings [composed] of 200-300 persons.” (Informant 35, male, early 50s, Montana)

“I have not communicated much with Bulgarians here [in Rotterdam]. Mostly with Roma because the neighbourhood we live in is famous already. Everybody knows that there are only Bulgarians and more precisely Roma. [...]In that neighbourhood it is complete madness. [...] Yes, yes, mahala (laughing). We have Bulgarian shops that are even competing with each other.” (Respondent 23, female, 20s, Sofia)

“[In Rotterdam] there are Bulgarian bars/cafes, discos, [though] we are missing a Bulgarian school. We might open one in a few months...” (Informant 39, male, 30, Montana)

²⁵ ‘Boza’ is a popular drink among Bulgarians, usually drunk for breakfast.

²⁶ ‘Banitsa’ is a traditional bake, prepared by mixing eggs and (white/yellow) cheese in filo pastry. It is usually consumed for breakfast from vendors outdoors as fast food but also it is homemade during special occasions such as holidays and birthdays; ‘banichka’ is another way to refer to ‘banitsa’.

In Cyprus a similar situation could be observed, where Roma from Bulgaria live in close proximity with each other, as well as other Bulgarian Roma and from countries such as Romania, Greece and Serbia. There is a proven curiosity and eagerness to find out more about each other, recognise each other as part of larger sibling groups, but maintain internal borders and differentiations as they belong to different groups. Also, in Cyprus, there are churches in which Roma congregate and in the Roma language.

“Interviewer – Did you meet other Roma there [in Cyprus]?”

Quite a lot! From Romania, from Greece and Serbia. They are many there. One town they have totally re-inhabited. They are not only Roma. The major part are those I was talking to you about - the Lahove.²⁷ On every other corner you may see a Romche, you can greet him and see what is going on...” (Respondent 69, male, early 20, Stara Zagora)

“Interviewer – “So there were many of you there?”

Many, many. Maybe more than 2,000-3,000 [...] there were also Turks, Bulgarians, though the majority were Roma.

Interviewer – Which part of Bulgaria were they from?

Mostly we were from Stara Zagora, though there were others from Kazanluk, Burgas, Varna, Talbuhin – mostly from these towns.

Interviewer - So, how were relations there like? It is like a small community.

Yes. We respected each other a lot. [...] We even opened up Bulgarian bars, places to eat; we were selling ‘mekitsas’²⁸ – everything was for us. Simply, when you go there you don’t feel homesick. There were ‘mekitsas’, ‘shkembe chorba’²⁹ – everything. [...] The ‘boza’ also. Everything we were importing- ‘halva’³⁰ also – everything.” (Respondent 53, male, 50-60, Stara Zagora)

From the quotes and the evidence which interlocutors give, it becomes obvious that there is the emergence of centres which begin to resemble the mahalas of Bulgaria. There, migrants may convene and meet with each other, as well as disparate groups of Roma groups for various purposes. One certain reason they convene, notwithstanding, is because of shared interests and due to the things which these centres have to offer. Thus, Roma groups might gather together in spaces abroad for the sake of religion, to commemorate holidays or pivotal life events such as

²⁷ ‘Lahove’ is another sub-group of Roma groups in Bulgaria.

²⁸ ‘Mekitsa’ is also another favourite breakfast (snack) option for many Bulgarians. It is made of deep fried dough and yoghurt.

²⁹ ‘Shkembe chorba’ is a Bulgarian form of tripe soup.

³⁰ A sweet confectionary which could be based on nuts and butter or flour.

weddings, but they might be attracted to spaces due to what they have to offer – such as food and drinks which are desired by all, regardless of their differences.

There are, therefore, three main scenarios which could be observed among Roma migrants abroad. As Roma find themselves abroad, this puts them almost automatically in a field which would suggest competition among themselves and others for access to resources and dominance. Therefore, the first level of analysis is on the individual level. Many informants shared that in being abroad reliance on the help of relatives and close friends is superficial and at the very core each needs to fight on their own and count on their own abilities in their quests to find jobs and earnings. The second level of analysis is on the intra-group level where different Roma groups from Bulgaria compete between one another for dominance. For example, informants spoke of such competition between the two most established groups in Rotterdam – those from Montana and those from Shumen. The third level of analysis is on a national level, where there is a differentiation between ‘Roma from Bulgaria’ and those from other countries such as Serbia or Romania. In these cases, they were seen as different and as threats to the Bulgarian Roma identities and their job prospects abroad.

This work would like to argue that these three levels of analysis are fluid and may prove irrelevant at any time and that is exactly what makes the Roma case peculiar. It is possible that conflicts between and within Roma groups emerge but also, concomitantly, that ‘new’ friendships have been established and that groups come together at times when they share common interests.

Correspondingly, even though it is hard to pin down and talk about one process or another in complete terms, this work maintains that there is the potential for the emergence of other, new realities, such as the processes of ‘consolidation’ or ‘segmentation’ of new Roma groups (Marushiakova and Popov, 2004). The outcome of one process or another would mainly depend on the common interests Roma migrants may share or disagree on while abroad. Therefore, at this stage, and in light of the discussion about the flux and changes inherent within the processes of migration, it is fair to speak about processes and the emergence or birth of new

phenomena, identities, and feelings of belonging, rather than established episodes or events in our discussion regarding feelings and identities of Roma migrants. So there is a close relationship between the meaning or aims and interests of Roma interlocutors, their identities and the spaces they happen to occupy. This analysis also agrees with Massey's (1991) understanding of space which is "a meeting place" and one where various relationships blend and converge. Thus, in places it would be normal for conflict to emerge as it is made up of multiple relations which may compete with one another. At the same time, consensus and alliances can be built as well. Nevertheless, due to the open nature of space and the various ways relationships can unfold, these build new relations and new identities which are always in the process of becoming.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the feelings of belonging of Roma migrants. It is contended that Bulgarian Roma migrants set off with the initial intention to meet their economic and financial needs abroad. Their choices of destination are mainly influenced and determined by the availability of relatives and friends who are in a position to initially help them settle down abroad. Most of all, they follow the stream of migration in the neighbourhoods they occupy. That is why we can see informants from Stara Zagora migrate mainly towards, among other places, Poland, Czech Republic and Spain. Migrants from Montana have formed communities of their own in Rotterdam and Belgium, and while migrants from Sofia migrate to places such as Spain, Germany, Greece and other countries, there were no indications of the establishment of considerable Roma neighbourhoods who are originally from Sofia. It should be highlighted, however, that the presence of Roma abroad is composed not solely by members of a certain Romani group. Often, they find themselves living and renting with Roma groups from different parts of Bulgaria or from other countries, as well other immigrants.

Nevertheless, it could be asserted that decisions to move away are heavily influenced by acquaintances and connections abroad. Roma seem to trust the advice of their own people and friends and thus know they could rely on each other abroad. In cases when they find themselves abroad in big numbers, such as in Rotterdam, Ghent, or

Warsaw, they engage in familiar activities which make them feel comfortable and often create their own spaces. As a result, they often relate about the ways they feel while being abroad and in the spaces they occupy, such as when they live in towns with a considerable Roma presence they relate that they feel similar to being in their Bulgarian home-towns or mahalas. They are not only able to meet familiar faces but also seek to cater for their needs through the establishment of churches, meeting places and businesses and even have the intentions to set up Bulgarian Sunday schools. All these thus seek to remind them of Bulgaria and make them feel 'at home'.

The concept of "simultaneity" or the diminishing of the importance of national boundaries, was also observed in this research (Levitt and Schiller, 2008, p.182). Roma migrants demonstrated feelings of belonging to their foreign places and Bulgaria at the same time. The feelings of belonging in foreign places are born as they spend increasing amounts of time abroad, become used to and familiar with relations and contacts, the new system, the way of living, and very importantly because of their children. 'Home' environments for the children of Roma abroad thus become countries other than Bulgaria, as they are born and raised there, study and socialise with environments other than Bulgaria. In these cases, even though parents might have strong feelings of attachment towards their places of birth, they come to terms with the fact that they ought to cater for the best interests of their children. As one informant said, "wherever my children are, that is where I will be [and] wherever my grandchildren are, that is where I am." (Informant 22, male, 40s, Sofia)

In the cases when Roma face negative treatment abroad, the only thing they are left with is to try to stick together and try to persevere within the hardships they face. They have no other chances but put up with unfair treatment, disrespect and different forms of aggression in order to gain the painfully needed material advances. In these cases, their perceptions of 'home' continue to be linked with Bulgaria and they do not recommend to anybody to migrate, unless they really have to as it is an option of last resort. Going abroad, in such cases, is seen merely as a process where they could extract material gains (or "desh") while Bulgaria remains to be the place where they feel they really belong ("bidesh").

The next section on identity will continue this discussion and will try to build on it by tracing Roma transnationalism, identity construction and markers and the notions of 'Romanipe.'

Chapter 6 Romani Identity as part of Migration and 'Romanipe'

6.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to understand the formation of the identities of Roma migrants. Firstly, it will explore the role of feelings of Otherness and who they feel they are, as opposed to those they distance themselves from. Secondly, it looks into the concept of 'Romanipe' and the practices of Roma migrants as indicative of their identities. The intersection between the two – their feelings and their practices – makes the Roma case quite specific and poignant to study, as Roma are in a constant struggle to not only react towards who they come across, but also the things they do. What it turns out due to their migratory processes, furthermore, is the emergence of something new, as characteristic of 'their ways.'

This chapter first examines who Roma migrants consider themselves different from and who they consider they should keep their distance from. The section 'The Gaze, the Other and Roma Migrants' demonstrates how the external 'Gaze' gives birth to their identities and informs the ways they behave abroad, and also sometimes inform them what Roma 'should be'. This is why Roma migrants try to hide their ethnicities abroad due to fear they will not be accepted by the host societies and also a majority of them seek to prove that such labels are wrong.

It is thus not surprising for them to find out that (similar to their home countries) the Roma are not welcomed or accepted abroad. This in turn could explain why Roma see Gadjo, or non-Roma, as a whole is in opposition to them. The analysis does not stop there, however, and shows that there is more to a Roma versus Gadjo narrative. Rather, distance and Othering can exist between the Roma groups themselves due to limited encounters between different sub-groups, the lack of mutual trust and the negative labels -they all share – and this explains why they sometimes perceive each other as threats. More importantly, Roma have demonstrated themselves to behave

no differently to Gadjó societies they oppose, dislike and seek to distance themselves from, as criminal, immoral and negative acts and behaviours.

The chapter continues with a discussion about the idea of 'Romanipe.' It argues that 'Romanipe' should be studied as fluid and always in the process of becoming. The Roma identities are seen as a reaction to the encounters of migrants with the societies they come across and, as argued earlier, this gives birth to their (new) identities. Furthermore, Romanipe becomes a negotiation between what Roma perceive 'should' or is perceived as 'typical' for Roma but also that which is adequate, acceptable and compatible in the current day, as well as the spaces they happen to occupy. Arising from this, the terms 'art of living' and 'selective multiculturalism' were utilised in this work. The participants of this research have demonstrated their readiness and willingness to be part of the world and absorb from it as much as they can, internalise it and appropriate different elements from it, which in turn results in the creation of different assemblages or hybrids that bear the common name Roma. In this sense, the discussion of a 'third space' is central to this discussion, one which stresses the importance of space (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 2007). Romanipe, it is argued, is open to interpretation, is always flexible and open to accepting new forms/shapes and meanings.

6.2. The gaze, the 'Other' and Roma migrants

In order to better understand the identities of Roma, this research sought to study who the 'Other' is for Bulgarian migrants and how they relate with the 'Other'. The empirical data pointed towards the intricate relations between the role of the 'Gaze' and the attached labels of the Roma on the one hand, and who and what Roma migrants have decided to 'Other' or to distance themselves from, on the other. This section argues that the worldviews that people abroad tend to hold affects how Roma decide to behave and identify themselves as migrants abroad and also it influences who they want to keep a distance from. These realisations constitute major facets of their identities and make this research peculiar. Therefore, this section will attempt to explore the role of the external 'Gaze' as a major source of the birth of the identity of Roma migrants and also try to explore who, when and how Roma migrants 'Other.' This point will be considered again when discussing 'Romanipe.'

Csepeli and Simon (2004, p.136) put it well: “[t]he losers of the whole identification process is the Roma themselves whose voice is not heard”. This research tries to avoid generalisations when talking about ‘the Roma’ or ‘Roma culture’, often in general terms. It is also a reaction to the ways Roma are perceived and depicted in Europe by ‘major societies’ – often as threats and different or in opposition to societies – or as ‘Other.’ It is thus interested to trace and capture changes, experiences and observations as noticed by the Romani migrants themselves.

The literature suggests that the ‘Other’ plays a special role in determining one’s sense of identity and belonging. The creation and existence of an Other is hence necessary in perceiving both the surrounding world and the self. Identities, as a result, would rely on stereotypes and boundaries, which are all culturally rooted and all depend on discourse, setting, context, space, as well as the messages people want to convey (Sibley, 1995; Gilman, 1985; Bhabha, 1994; Foucault, 1972; Valentine, 1993a, 1993b; Panelli, 2004). For Hetherington (2000), identity is how we associate and how we include or exclude others from membership of a particular identification. In order fears, mistrust, stereotypes and labels to be eradicated, and also for a better perception of the world to be perceived, authors argue and encourage that there must be a fair amount of engagement with the ‘Other.’ Thus, even though relying on boundaries can prove helpful in perceiving the world around us and some initial knowledge, this has to be challenged by a fair engagement with ‘the Other.’ The inherent greater freedoms characteristic of the EU makes this engagement with ‘others’ more prominent, especially as state boundaries become arguably less relevant, with greater movement of and mobility for people (and with the inherent importance of technological advancements, ease of travel, and accessible ways of communication globally).

Fraser (1995) talks about the social, geographical and occupational adaptability of Roma, as well as their tendency to feel the Otherness of the non-Roma, the Gadge.³¹ He conveys that customs may sometimes fade away, though “this does not destroy or diminish the feelings of separateness” (Fraser, 1995, p.305). This in return has

³¹ Gadge (plural of Gadjo) can be also found in literature as Gadze, Gadge, Gaze, Gaugo, Kaaje, Das (among some Muslim Roma).

resulted in adapting to the major societies but preserving a social distance, fortified by “the suspicion with which they were treated by the Gadge” (Fraser, 1995, p.319). It is important to test the veracity of the statement above and explore the intersection between boundary maintenance of Roma migrants abroad and the ‘shrinking’ of space.

6.2.1. Who are the Roma? A stifled identity

The origins of the ways Roma see and identify themselves are multifaceted: they arise as a direct result of the ways they are framed by the general society. On the one hand, they become aware of the existing labels attached to them and begin to internalise them; concomitantly, they try to react to these stereotypes and labels by disagreeing with them or acting in ways to refute and challenge them.

The majority of the participants shared that they are intimidated to reveal their Romani identities while abroad. Such trepidation was born out of their awareness of the predominant labels and stereotypes about the Roma. As a result, they have been trying to hide it whenever needed and possible.

“...because when I arrived in Tripoli [Greece], the first thing [the local Roma from Bulgaria] warned us was not to say I am a Ciganka. I did not know them from before; I met them [in Greece] for the first time. My mother used to know [them]. The first thing they said was ‘ah, you won't say you are a Ciganka because they don't want the Cigani here’.” (Informant 43, female, Montana, 20s)

“So, when we arrived there, my aunt was there – my mom's sister. So, when I went there, my aunt did not allow me to put on dresses, long dresses. She did not let me. She said ‘you won't dress in long dresses, they will think you are Gitanka.’ ‘Why aunty, do they have anything against the Gitanci? What is going on?’- ‘No, no they don't want us here, so you won't use long dresses!’ To tell you, I listened to my aunt. I put on pants, skirts, but you cannot see people giving you bad looks.” (Informant 76, female, Stara Zagora, 50s)

“We the Cigani are famous already with a bad name. Even in front of the foreigners we hide [our identity]. Even in front of the foreigners there.” (Informant 14, female, Sofia, late 50s)

As could be clearly felt, within their very initial arrivals abroad, Roma migrants learn from relatives and friends not to reveal their identities by any means. Roma, we learn from the cases above, are not well-received by the local population in countries such as Greece and Spain. Clearly, being a Roma in most of the countries of Europe is still associated with the predominant existing stereotypes and (often negative) labels which have urged Romani migrants which have imposed a definition of who the Roma are. Thus, while they find themselves amongst non-Roma or in their work-places they refrain from conversing in the Romani language, dressing the ways they are used to and to even socialise with others who could be recognised by the general society as Roma. All this is received in two major ways. On the one hand, Roma migrants are not surprised at all to find out that they are undesired and disliked. They also receive this fact and accept it as part of their natural lives. On the other hand, they recognise that such rigid mind-sets about ‘the Roma’ are major impediments to their lives and life-prospects. They admit that the failure of non-Roma to recognise their individual, human characteristics, abilities and qualities constitute a major source of frustration and disappointment in their lives.

One of the key elements of Romani identity is their acknowledgement of these notions of non-acceptance and rigid portrayal, but also how they react to them. Informants complain about all Roma being strangely homogenous. Thus, the predominantly negative labels attached to them have then become the main source of the commonality of the various Romani communities. Yet few of the individuals demonstrated the courage to stand up and openly try to challenge these well-solidified clichés about them.

“[We are] nowhere accepted. No matter what country, we are nervous to say ‘I am a Rom’. We are intimidated. I am telling the truth and I won't lie to you. I am intimidated because when people hear ‘Gypsy’ they say that it is not good. They already start looking at you with negativity and you ruin your chances. You have no chance to become better off. So, we live with this nervousness/intimidation and this has stayed inside us. These are true things...” (Informant 37, male, Montana, 50s)

“Well, people do it for us to be discriminated. I think that people have made it so that we are discriminated against [...] I don’t know why are we culpable. I don’t know what are we are culpable of. I don’t know why we are blamed for being dark[skinned]...” (Informant 70, male, Stara Zagora, early 20s)

Yet the pain and frustration of many Roma due to the unfair way they are generally perceived and treated by non-Roma is one of the factors which unites the Roma and forms their identities. They can thus feel the pain and agony due the non-recognition from the Gagje.

6.2.2. Who is the ‘Other’?

This section will try to demonstrate that there are different levels of the analysis of Romani identity. These levels are intertwined and are time and place-specific. First of all, there is a dichotomy which exists in the conscience of migrant Roma, no matter where they are. This opposition is clear and could be seen as ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’, where Roma portray the non-Roma as those who should be blamed for their unfair treatment, their failure to recognise their individual characteristics and nuances. We also see that stereotypes and labels attached to the Roma at large still play crucial roles in the ways Roma are perceived and treated abroad. The key argument is that Roma are not surprised to find out that hosts express the same anti-Romani sentiments as ‘at home.’

After delving deeper into the narratives of the interlocutors, this discussion will be continued to argue that there is more to an Us versus Them narrative, and such a distinction is incomplete. It appears that we can speak of ‘Processes of Othering’ which are based on labels and stereotypes and Romani groups can dislike each other and find each other as threats. These are based on limited encounter between the groups and importantly because of the current rigid labels and stereotypes attached to the Roma – in Bulgaria and abroad alike.

The analysis demonstrates that ‘enemies’ can equally be Roma from countries other than Bulgaria and Roma from Bulgaria, but from different geographical regions. The key argument is that there is a difference and rivalry between Romani sub-groups not because they might come from various places or regions but because of immoral and

criminal behaviour and ignorance which might be observed among people. This makes Roma no different in any radical ways from non-Roma. Nevertheless, despite the observed disagreements and differences which apparently exist between the Roma, they continue to regard themselves as Roma. This is a key which portrays them as insiders and outsiders at the same time and informs the identity of the Roma.

6.2.2.1. 'Us' vs 'Them'

It turns out that a common and unifying factor for many Roma, not surprisingly, is to assume that Roma groups share a common feeling towards the Gadge – or all who are not one of them and who refuse to accept 'the Roma'. One of the reasons why many of the informants believed they should hide their ethnicity is because host societies would change their views about them, fail to recognise their human qualities and no matter what they do and how hard they try, their attitudes about Roma would stay unchanged. Thus, there was a common, shared feeling of frustration among Roma due to the inability of societies to recognise them as regular people, and this acts as a unifying factor among them, a feeling of 'us' and 'them.'

"I am reminding [you], are we not all Cigani? If you are more educated or had a better upbringing, you still are in this bracket, 'Cigani'." (Informant 37, female, Montana, 50s)

The irony of Informant 37 reminds us about the rigid way Roma are perceived, regardless of their social levels. She is clearly stating that this failure to register numerous positive and successful examples among many Roma frames them as one rigid whole. This rigidity, furthermore, acts as a form of encouragement to Roma who see the need to prove to the world they are more than what they are thought to be, on the one hand, but at the same time this makes them feel they are Roma, on the other.

"That is why we strive to develop ourselves and to show people – 'here, we are bright; we can; you are not any different than us...' That is it!" (Informant 35, male, Montana, early 50s)

“We”, in Respondent 35’s quote, puts Roma as one united body who has recognised the necessity to prove to the Gadjo world they are more than they are thought to be.

“That is how I explain it to myself because the difference between us and the Bulgarians is that Bulgarians look at us as second class people; while we are the opposite – we strive to show them that we can even more than [them]; and that we can be people like [them].” (Informant 35, male, Montana, early 50s)

The narrative of Informant 35 is a demonstration about the clear struggle between Roma and Bulgarians.³² This is not only a desire to prove that Roma are able to be like the non-Roma but also they are eager to prove that they are even better. On the one hand, Roma feel they are not respected by the majority of societies, while on the other hand, they wholeheartedly strive for recognition and credibility. This clear demarcation between ‘vindicated Roma’ and unfair ‘Others’, is a sign of the constant struggle between the two. Also, this feeling to ‘over-compensate’ inherent in many Roma is a sign of the discrimination which Roma experience. Therefore, there is an intricate relation between this search for approval and recognition of the ‘Gaze’ of the ‘Other’, on the one hand, and the feeling what it would actually mean to be Roma, on the other.

“Well...[laughing] I am proud of what I am – as a person. It does not matter what I am, but as a person. But as a Romka,³³ here in our country, you need to prove yourself in I don’t know what kinds of ways so that the Bulgarians accept you.

[...In Italy] I know they don’t accept us. They don’t accept us! That is what I am saying – they don’t accept us – and that is offensive and sickens me if you want to know. Because truly speaking, that is what I am. I am a Romka [laughing].” (Informant 45, female, Montana, 40s)

The majority of the Roma informants shared a feeling of frustration due to the ways they are perceived and received by the societies abroad. Due to their experiences in the past and in their home towns, they are not surprised at the similar anti-Gypsy sentiments and as migrants in the host societies they find themselves in today. Even though participants did not necessarily agree with unfair generalisations, portrayals

³² In the Roma vocabulary, ‘Bulgarians’ can also refer to any other person who is not Roma. The example here refers not only to ethnic Bulgarians, but all those who are not Roma.

³³ Romka in Bulgarian is a female Roma

and labels of the Roma as they limit the expression and recognition of their individual identities, this bracketing is the source of their reaction towards the Gadge and all those who they see them as guilty for their misfortunes. Non-Roma are thus recognised by Roma as those who are culpable of the inadequate recognition of the Roma and therefore their miseries. Interestingly, these sentiments are reciprocal to the widespread anti-‘Gypsy’ sentiments across Europe. While historically Roma were looked at with suspicion and mistrust, today Roma are still seen as threats to societies and as convenient scapegoats during times of major political and economic crises.

Does this all suggest, however, that there is an ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ narrative for Roma migrants? The findings of this study point towards a deeper discourse than the one described above and the following section will try to illustrate the role of labels and stereotypes attached to the Roma and further processes of Othering.

6.2.2.2. Processes of othering

As the previous section tried to convey, there is an established set of beliefs towards ‘who the Roma are’ and ‘what they do’ and these have been perpetuated due to various factors such as master narratives and the mass media. As a result, and not surprisingly, these narratives have managed to infiltrate the consciousness of the Roma themselves as they have started to internalise the images, labels and stereotypes attached to them. What it turns out then is that there is more to an ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ narrative and there are other factors which inform who Roma may consider as threats to their identities and survival. The labels attached to the Roma, thanks to general narrative about the Roma, on the one hand, and the self-worth and the self-perception of Roma migrants, on the other hand, seem to interact with each other in intricate and sensitive ways.

It is not only that Roma are eager to prove to the world that they are different and more than the labels attached to them, but also they have a well-established idea who they are as Roma. Yet what is interesting is that they have internalised these labels and stereotypes and sometimes Roma behave towards their own ethnic group no differently than the non-Roma. Roma become and have fallen victims to the ways

they are portrayed as a whole, and yet they are not immune from Othering members of their own ethnic group. Interlocutors demonstrated this by commenting on the ways Roma from other regions in Bulgaria and from other countries are and judged them in negative lights, even though they are all Roma. This formed narrative of distancing by the Roma then does not differ in any way to that of non-Roma.

“Well, in principle, as I know he/she is a thief, how can you keep in touch with such persons. They will say – they are [dealing] together; do you get it? Simply when I am in [front of] the shop, when they greet me in Ciganski [Roma language], I reply in Dutch and ask them what they want, as [if] I don’t understand him/her; do you understand? He asks again – ‘Rom sinyan?’ [‘Are you a Roma?’] - ‘Niet begrijpen’ [In Dutch – ‘I don’t understand’]. I speak Dutch, Russian, Yugoslavian... As if I don’t understand Romanes. If I say I know they will sit next to you and start talking and that will be the end [of it]. If you think they [local Dutch] won’t find out you are not a Ciganin... There they [Dutch] say that the Cigani steal [laughing]. (Informant 30, male, Montana, 50s)

Here Informant 30 has clearly taken the stance of distancing himself from fellow Roma from Romania. On the one hand, he is eager to disassociate himself from a group of Roma and on the other hand, the Respondent refers to the existing general narratives regarding the Roma. The decision to distance himself is strategic. Firstly, he does not want to be associated with a group of people who are perceived as thieves by the local Dutch and, secondly, he has taken a stance of distancing himself, as a Roma he would also complain about Roma being perceived as thieves. The quote above is quite telling. Here we sense the apprehensions of our informant as he is not able to open up in the Netherlands and associate openly with the Romanian Roma he comes across there. Respondent 30 is seemingly determined to consciously disassociate himself and to even discriminate against Roma groups as he has assumed that they are perceived negatively and unfavourably by the local Dutch society. Thus, they do not differ much as Roma often take the position of distancing themselves from Roma groups which are different than their own. In this example, Informant 30 has assumed the role of non-Roma who has decided to block out Romani groups which are different than his own.

Not much different is the narrative of Informant 14 from Sofia who has been living and working in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, for more than seven years. During her years there, her ‘knowledge’ about the local Roma has been primarily informed by

the existing narratives and stereotypes about the Gitanos. Here is what she relates about them:

“I have heard the Spaniards calling them Gitano; and they say ‘mucho rico’ [Spanish for ‘very rich’] – their first [response] is that they are rich; the second [...] is that they sell drugs. But, I don’t hear anything else to be said about them.

Interviewer – “Have you met them personally?”

“Yes. They even proposed to me to clean a house – they were supposed to pay me and my daughter/sister-in-law very well – she was there too. We turned [the offer] down – simply, we were scared. Even though they are one of ours; they realised we are also Cigani...” (Informant 14, female, Sofia, late 50s)

Here we see another illustration of the fear and mistrust of Roma by another group of their own ethnicity. This can be explained by limited and insufficient encounters between the two Roma groups, who as a result have fallen victims of their own stereotypes. Not surprisingly, we notice the notions of mistrust and avoidance of the two Bulgarian Roma who have decided to base their live observations on the ‘knowledge’ production of well-established narratives of the local Spanish population who depict the Gitanos as thieves and criminals. Even though Informant 14 recognises and feels Spanish Roma as a sibling group (“they are one of ours”), she and her daughter/sister-in-law apparently do not want to risk closer personal contact with them, but took a stance of mistrust and fear instead. They demonstrate they have believed what the general public describes the Gitanos are, even though the two Roma groups have not had any other personal experiences of each other. The decisions of Respondent 14 and her relative have been a judgement based on predominant general narratives and arrive at an irrational judgement. Again, this is another example of distancing and fear of Roma by other Roma, who in this case happen to have different countries of origin.

6.2.2.3. Difference and rivalry between Roma sub-groups

There is an important aspect of the identities of migrant Roma which has been explored earlier in the Belonging and Space Chapter. Bulgarian Roma today have the opportunity, not widely experienced before, to meet and co-exist not only with Roma from other countries such as Romania, Spain, Serbia and other countries in Europe, but also Romani groups from different parts of Bulgaria. It turned out there could exist a clear demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ when it comes to different Roma

sub-groups. First of all, a clear distinction can be observed among some informants who see Bulgarian Roma as different and better than other Romani groups. On the other hand, it was not rare that a certain Roma sub-group considered itself as better than another from another part of Bulgaria. Yet, this rivalry between groups is common and, nevertheless, they all consider and recognise themselves as Roma.

“I cannot accept such people. So they cannot be Cigani, even if they are Serbian – the same way – if they are doing the same things [stealing and illegality] even though it is only the Cigani who are renowned for this [everybody on our table starts laughing]. I won’t accept it, do you understand?” (Informant 31, female, Montana, early 20s)

More precisely, it is the immoral behaviour which Roma dislike and this does not differ in any way from what any person would disprove and disagree with. Here Informant 31 tries to disassociate herself from any person or groups of people, Roma and Gadjos alike, who involve themselves in criminal acts. She refers to the Roma from Serbia who, identical to the way Roma are portrayed as a whole, have the image of thieves and yet, she fails to identify herself with such Roma.

“I am quite disappointed by the Roma people themselves. Sometimes I say to myself that I cannot escape from the fact that I am Romka; I won’t hide. I admit it that I am a Romka. But the fact that the other people do so makes our prestige go down to zero. And sometimes I am sorry I am such [Roma]. [Yet] I say to myself, it is bad to regret it...” (Informant 23, female, Sofia, 20s)

These trepidations are also indicative of the internal struggle which predominate in the stories of the majority of the interlocutors. What they seem to dislike and disown are the illegal, negative and immoral acts of those who have blemished and are blemishing their images as Roma. Even more, and in line with the discussion of the processes of Othering, there were instances in which Roma have behaved in a manner which does not differ at all from the way any person would act with people with little education, poor integration and orientation in the general society.

“Look how they are selling the [cell phone] Galaxy S4 which is usually priced at 600 euro, while they sell it for 200. I have bought two plasma TV for 200 euros each – brand new from the box! When I need electronics I go and tell him ‘brother, do you want to earn something. I go with him in a shop, look around and tell him – ‘this TV!’ When he gives his bank account, the permit for work to the stuff in the shop, they check him and give him the TV [on leasing]; he pays one euro and receives the television. When we are out I get the [brand

new] boxed TV, I pay him half of the price and that is it.” (Informant 29, male, Montana, 30s)

The passage above is by an interlocutor from Montana who related his encounter with another sub-group of Roma from the same region in Bulgaria. What he wanted to illustrate is that he has outsmarted that particular group of Roma. Furthermore, he has described them as ones who lack a fair sense of reason and do not know what is in their best interest as migrants and residents in another country. Informant 29 has also suggested that he is able to trick them and take advantage of their poor orientation in society, and this deserves ridicule. This example is illustrative of a negative attitude and judgement towards one group of Roma by another. It appears that even though they speak the same language and come from the same country, and even region, Roma can not only take advantage of each other but also behave and treat each other with disdain.

6.2.2.4. Summary

As it turns out, there are two main layers informing the conscience of the Roma migrants. On the one hand, they are aware of the established images and predominant narratives about the Roma. They seem not to differ much from their experiences in their home towns, as Bulgarian citizens and when they find themselves abroad, they are not surprised to find out similarly established anti-Roma sentiments. Interlocutors recognised this as unfair and unjust, as it limits their identities as well as their existence and prospects abroad. Thus, they strive hard to prove the host societies wrong and to show them that they are more than what they are thought to be and even better than the rest. This points to the second layer of Roma identity – it becomes a reaction towards and against all those non-Roma who fail to recognise the great human talents and qualities of the Roma. This general scenario forms a narrative of ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ and could be said to be common among Roma groups, regardless of their differences. Yet such narratives appear to be inadequate as the clear factors which give birth to Othering are features and traits which are deemed and perceived as ‘negative’ and disliked by people from all walks of life. Ignorance, illiteracy and thus involvement of any person in criminal activities, regardless of their ethnic belonging is perceived negatively by non-Roma and Roma

alike. As it becomes clear from the examples above, Roma are not immune from Othering fellow Roma due to established stereotypes as well as limited encounters which ultimately makes Roma and Gadjó no different from each.

This section has sought to shed light into the main processes informing the consciousness of Roma regarding their identities. This appeared to be affected by master narratives, labels attached to the communities and the search for recognition of the Other. Yet what appeared to be Othered were characteristics and practices deemed as 'bad,' 'negative,' or 'immoral,' both by Gadjó and certain Roma groups. The next section will continue the analysis of Roma identity by exploring the concept of 'Romanipe,' or what it really feels like and means to be Roma, in the context of migration. It will hopefully illustrate why this study of the Roma is poignant and worthy of study.

6.3. 'Romanipe' and an identity of becoming

The processes of migration are materialising in many changes for Bulgarian Roma migrants. As growing numbers of Roma are now beginning to live and work in various countries in Europe, they have novel chances to meet other Roma, to observe and discover similarities and differences. It should be noted that meeting other Roma abroad is accompanied with feelings of curiosity and excitement. Thus, while at times they try and seek to make friends with other Roma, in other cases they seek to keep a distance from them due to the nature of the context, as well as because of the lack of adequate exposure between each other. Nevertheless, many of the respondents seem to have decided to stay in close proximity to the Roma communities in the host societies and this serves as a way to maintain their Roma identities.

Romanipe³⁴ is a loaded term. In the sections above we saw that there can be stark felt differences between the Roma people themselves – based on the countries and the regions they come from and the things they disagree about. The term 'Romanipe' instead tries to reconcile the differences between the Roma people and unite them all

³⁴ Romanipen, Romaniman, Romanimo, Romanyia, Cikánství, etc.

under certain observed commonalities such as their shared Indian origin, language, and various practices. Romanipe could be then translated as Romaness, Romahood and Gypsyhood or Gypsiness³⁵. All these terms bear a (set of) certain essential characteristics.

Advocates who stress the commonalities observed among many Roma bring linguistics, customs, traditions, culture and the sense of belonging to a larger fraternal group, as well as shared experiences of various forms of exclusion, marginalisation and non-recognition. In this case, 'Romanipe' is a form of projection of certain well-cemented ideas about what it means to be a Roma. Thus, for example, if literature portrays Roma as vagrants free of the confines of law, living in the outskirts of towns and close to nature, that is what people, and scholars, would look at in order to find and define Roma people. This approach of studying Roma and 'Romanipe' (as part of their identity) considers the group as an organic whole, while inter-group and individual differences are overlooked and ignored. Thus, we can see a kind of perpetuation of knowledge which could be at the same time recognised as knowledge production. Authors such as Lee (2004), Hancock (2004, 2010), Marushiakova and Popov (2012), and Clark (2004) argue that in their search to discover the true Roma, scholars are guilty of imposing an identity on Roma. There is also a danger of a 'continuation' of knowledge, which, without being academically verified and checked, produces inaccurate information and images of Roma and thus a distorted image of their identity, if we could refer to it in the singular. From these criticisms stems the actual take of this work on 'Romanipe' – or the lived experiences of Roma themselves and what they have to say about what it takes and feels to be a Roma. A Romanian Roma once warned that translating 'Romanipen' (as it is used in her dialect) would result in "losing the whole point" of how it is felt and that it is very hard to put in words. This is also in tune with the focus of this research - the insider perspectives of Roma informants in migration.

³⁵ The old term preferred by the Gypsy Lore Society which was set up in Britain in 1888 as an organisation whose enthusiastic members were eager to discover the 'true Romani' and learn more about them).

Therefore, this section will delve into the hugely neglected side of the debate and demonstrates that Romani identities are complex and it would be unjust to think of them as a 'list' of specific characteristics. Instead, ideas of 'Romanipe' become an organic process, especially as migration and where new group and individual experiences are encountered in new spaces. Thus, as this work seeks to illuminate the insider perspective, a third way to study 'Romanipe' could be by the interpretation of the Roma people themselves by studying their shared observations due to their migrations. This section will first explore the role of the 'Gaze', or the need to satisfy external expectations, which gives birth to their identities. It will then look into the peculiar ability of Roma to take various forms and shapes depending on the spaces they occupy, and lastly it will try to emphasise how the Roma have managed and continue to maintain their distinctiveness by looking into their selectivity and distilling of the factors which they allow to form part of their culture, customs and identities.

6.3.1. 'Romanipe' – negotiating stereotypes and a reaction of the external gaze

One of the key ways 'Romanipe' could be studied and understood is to see how Roma people themselves interpret it. The role of the external gaze, it appears, is crucial to the ways Roma identities are perceived and also performed. For Cavallaro (2001), the world is inter-subjective and each individual's interpretations always interact with those of other people. The external gaze plays a determining role in our self-identification or self-realisation. For Jean-Paul Sartre it is only when we become the object of another person's gaze that we really come into being (Cavallaro, 2001, p.121). Thus, our existence is defined and influenced by the recognition of others, even though their opinion or gaze might be limiting and missing the full essence of our selves. Thus, it could be said that the ways societies perceive Roma influence how they see themselves. The gaze therefore informs to a great extent their own ideas about what a Roma is or what it ought to be, thus giving birth to their identities. Therefore, it should not be surprising that when asked what makes them Roma and to feel like one, Roma migrants gave mixed responses. These mixed feelings could be closely related to the predominant two camps of literature regarding portrayal and master narratives about the Roma. It appears the general discourse about Roma could

be located on the opposite ends of a spectrum, while ignoring their nuances. Roma migration is thus able to bridge the gap between these clashing narratives about the Roma as they are now growingly able to learn and discover due to their travels.

It is not only the general predominant discourse which informs the subjective feelings of Roma about their identities. As they involve themselves in travel today, migrant Roma try to interpret and evaluate first-hand the feelings of the surrounding (host) population, as well as about the Roma there. The identities of Roma, it is observed, are a response or reaction to how they think they are seen and perceived. It therefore becomes a reaction to the penetrating, and often judging, gaze of the people they come across (both Roma and non-Roma) and the master narratives at hand. Thus, Bulgarian Roma strive to perform and act in order to 'entertain', to live up to these narratives – but also challenge them.

“We say we are Cigani, but they don't believe it. Ask me why? All the Cigani in the world are the richest people – barons. If you say to a Russian you are a Cigan they say to you – 'you steal, you sell your children!' – 'NO!' 'Then you are not a Ciganin! Your ancestors have lied to you something!' [the Russian] says 'we have not seen Cigani who work'.

The Cigani will do swindles. Those in the Netherlands are true Cigani- they don't work. There are rarely any [Roma] who work – most of them do swindles and shady affairs. Most deal with frauds, thefts, prostitutions – I am talking to you all across the world. *Our work [business]!* There are [Roma from] two, three towns who work; that is it!... and they [the locals] don't believe it. If you explain to them that you don't sell your kids, they count you as non-Ciganin straight away.” (Informant 29, male, Montana, 30s)

Today's era is unique in the sense that Bulgarian Roma migrants are now able to experience, meet and learn through first-hand interactions with other Roma, foreign cultures and people. It could be noticed that they have an interest to learn about other fellow Roma and they are happy about it. Nevertheless, and as it was argued earlier, the role of general stereotypes attached to them seems to be prevalent and quite stubborn even among the Roma people themselves. As the narrative of Respondent 29 informs, 'real Roma' are associated with outlaws and living on the edge of the law. What is probably the most telling part of his quote is that even though he does mention that his group of Roma are some of the 'few' who earn their living by fair labour, he does not fail to recognise illegal conduct as “our business/things” („наше работи“) and recognises them as things common to all Roma; he still associates with

them. For him not working, stealing and swindling are 'specific to us, as Roma, and that is what we usually do'. What Informant 29 essentially refers to with his narrative is the way the Roma are presented and portrayed generally– both in Bulgaria and elsewhere, most probably through the help of penetrating general media such as TV and newspapers. Thus, Bulgarian Roma have recognised and internalised the image that being an outlaw and an outcast is something specific for all Roma. Nevertheless, the informant refers to himself and the sub-group he belongs to as one of the 'few and rare' ones who do earn their living, and yet they are Roma.

Thus, the ways Roma migrants perceive their essential and intrinsic identities become a reaction to what others think of them. This creates a form of internal struggle and it is evident in many of the studied narratives. Thus, being a Roma, and 'Romanipe' are sometimes portrayed as two ends of an extreme spectrum by the Roma themselves. On the one side, it links well with the negative narratives about Roma as thieves, misers, impoverished persons who do not bring themselves to care much about the laws and norms of the societies they occupy. On the other end of the spectrum lie the noble travellers, sometimes nomads, who are free, stateless children of the world. No wonder, then, that interlocutors predominantly felt torn to put into words what it would actually mean to be a Roma. These opposing feelings could be exemplified by the following quote by Informant 28 from Montana:

"Romanipe...I can't interpret it. What should I say to you? [...laughing] It has both a negative and a positive connotation. Romanipe – цигания [Gypsiness] 'look what he has done – Гупынь (цигания). He has shat himself.'

Here the informant wants to stress that one of the ways it can be interpreted is that whenever someone makes a mess or a lousy job, and that must be attributed as Gypsiness (цигания).

Or like a custom/tradition – the positive – let's do our Gypsiness (циганското); a tradition of some kind. [Speaking in Romani] 'Amaro Romaibe te keras' ('To do our Romanipe')- something of the sort of the tradition. It has both positive and negative connotations. [...] Like a tradition; for example, in Vasilovden [Speaking in Romani] 'te keras amaro Romaibe' ('to do our Romanipe'); you prepare the duck, you celebrate...these things... [...] It is very relative. It can be interpreted both ways." (Informant 28, male, Montana, 40s)

Here, the examples the informant brings are positive and linked with traditions and certain practices around the household.

Thus, there are two opposing ways to understand what 'Romanipe' could be and mean. At one end of the spectrum, Informant 28 refers to ways or things which are negatively perceived by everybody, while at the other end there are things which are perceived by themselves as 'specific to' the Roma – such as performing and celebrating particular 'Romani' holidays. What is informative from the passage above, however, is the mixed feelings which the respondent shows and they are revealed subconsciously. The little pause and the laugh shortly after he has given consideration to what 'Romanipe' is could reveal the uneasy subject and the ways it could be defined, re-defined or described. Thus, it appears that arriving at a concise and clear definition about what a Roma could really be is a futile task. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the master narratives stemming from popular discourses. The ways Roma have been seen and portrayed by non-Roma influence to a great extent what ought to be seen as the traits of the Roma, including by the Roma themselves. This could be felt from the narrative above and also from the use of the word *they* and *ours* or *amaro* (in Romani). *They* is a way for Respondent 28 to claim non-attachment and distance from the external narratives of what Roma are perceived to be – always creating misery, failing to do anything properly or well. If it is agreed by non-Roma that making a mess is characteristic of all Roma, then Roma themselves start to internalise this narrative, understand and apply it among their own communities. As a result, if making a mess, littering and misery are associated as their intrinsic 'features', then Roma also begin to see them as one but also try to react against it. The narratives of Informants 28 and 29 relate closely. Firstly, Informant 29 sees his own Romani community as 'different' from all the rest of the Roma, as it does not involve itself in illegal activities. Interestingly, at the same time he has recognised that being a rascal is 'our business [things]'. 'Amaro Romaibe,' or our specific traditions, as the narrative of Interlocutor 28 argues, is linked with honourable traditions and celebrations – something which evokes feelings of pride and honour. Thus, we can notice the living interplay between being a Roma and doing what a Roma really does in their lives, on the one hand, and applying external narratives, labels and stereotypes to their own Roma groups, on the other.

6.3.2. Flexibility, the 'art of living' and survival as part of Romanipe

The analysis above ought to be understood as not exclusive but in light of the spirit of the majority of the informants of this study. They are ready to take various forms and shapes and are able to play different roles as they have learned that being flexible is intrinsic to survival in any given society. Thus, the ability and readiness to be malleable and be ready to fit into a new society was widely recognised by the Roma informants themselves as the most needed quality in their lives as Roma. This could substantiate their secret for survival or "art of living" (Liegeois, 2007, p.95).

Soja (2007) maintained that the full meanings of identity could be only understood when fully practiced and lived, while links, or associations, have little meanings due to their unstable nature. Similarly, Thrift (2007) argued that humans can hardly grasp the surrounding world as they are involved in constant processes of construction and co-construction for various reasons. Therefore, what they both propose is a "third space" which is equated to the lived experiences of individuals. Also referred to as the "trialectics of being" (Soja, 2007, p.262), space is seen as a vital facet in understanding identities and reality. For him, in order for us to understand identities and the world better we need to study not only the society and the historical characteristics but also space. Thus, knowledge of identities should be always situated within the confines of a certain space or place which would require continuous expansion of knowledge and open-mindedness that challenge current notions of what is presently known or perceived as 'true.'

Evidently, the processes of migration add another element to the Romani identity. First of all, they could be seen as Bulgarians, as they are citizens of this country, and thus for various reasons Roma may choose to identify solely as Bulgarians. Secondly, they seldom cease to see themselves as Roma as this has an intrinsic place in their consciousness and worldview. Lastly, as they migrate and move to new places, they become something else, which adds a new dimension or other layers to their identities. Their identities expand and evolve and they should not be seen as a contradiction of any kind; on the contrary, they are an enrichment to their Romani identities. No wonder, the Roma are seen often as colourful and diverse. Roma

groups can differ in the ways they celebrate and commemorate certain traditions and customs, as they are constantly involved in an intricate interaction with the societies they are in close contact with. This flexibility is widely perceived by the Roma themselves as one of their greatest assets. It is a necessity which is long recognised as vital and necessary for not only being in the world but also surviving it. Therefore, being a type of hybrid, or a 'rhizome', which can take various forms at various times and for various purposes, is becoming clearer as a characteristic of Roma. Roma could be seen as 'hybrids' as they are the result of the combination of different products – due to the interactions with the cultures and societies they come across. They could be also a 'rhizome' in the sense that they can continue changing their character and an image of theirs could/should not be seen as an end-result in any way (especially as we consider processes of migration).

In their narratives, many interlocutors demonstrated their malleability and abilities to play and bring to the fore their different (non-Roma) identities, while they could be Roma whenever they have to. Not only do they become acclimatised to certain places, but Roma migrants know they can feel comfortable in their Romani identities whenever that would be necessary. Bulgarian Roma migrants have demonstrated they are also able to distance themselves from others (as described earlier on) but also associate and socialise not only with their own groups but also other Romani groups, and this is an essential feature of their identities and characters. This could be observed, for example, among the Turkish-speaking Roma from the southern and eastern parts of Bulgaria who are able to identify themselves as Turks and/or Roma, depending on the situations they find themselves in. These decisions are strategic and political and inform their prospects for acceptance by individuals or the group in their interactions. This helps for smoother and easier interactions between Roma groups themselves and non-Roma.

“Real Rom... [with a sigh] it depends on where they have to be real Rom. If I am among our Cigani, yes, I am a real Roma-Kardarashka; I will keep the laws, I will keep the traditions for the moment; but as soon as I am away from them I become like a Bulgarian; if I go away to Austria I am following the Austrian rules, their requirements; I cannot say I am a real Ciganka, save among the Cigani.” (Informant 6, female, Sofia, 50s)

The search for 'real' Rom can be thus appreciated as a difficult and cumbersome task. It is hard to capture and define as Roma need to make sure they are flexible enough in order to satisfy the expectations and 'gaze' of the people they come across (and this certainly can reinforce stereotypes). These expectations are also valid within the differences which exist among different Roma groups. A Kaldarash Romni,³⁶ as exemplified in the quote of Informant 6, could be married to an Erlia Rom.³⁷ There are subtle differences between these two groups and thus Respondent 6 faces a great trouble to define what 'a real Rom' could mean. What she wants to certainly make clear is that there cannot be such thing as 'one type of real Roma' – that could be possible only in a certain setting, time and space and the 'real Rom' is being borne by the recognition of the surrounding society. Therefore, when in the company of a certain Romani sub-group Informant 6 needs to make sure to adjust her behaviour and acquaint herself with the customs, ways and behaviour of that certain community in order for her to be received as 'a real Romni.' What is important to note is that there are several ways of being a (real) Rom and they would not necessarily contradict each other but rather be equally true and valid. Nevertheless, that 'real Rom' can cease to exist, but only by necessity and, as if in a play, once out of the surrounding space of the Romani community and especially when they are abroad and required to behave like a Bulgarian, Turk, Jew or an Austrian. This should not come as a surprise, given the predominantly hostile views and rhetoric against Roma groups in Europe. What is argued here, nevertheless, is that the particular 'switching' of identification, the readiness and the ability to be malleable and take different forms, constitutes an essential part of Romani identity. It is also argued that Roma have learned the need to perform and 'play' in order to be recognised by the expectations of the people they come across.

This is probably a key to Roma identity. They have realised over their history and past experiences that, in order to settle down and live appropriately in a certain community, flexibility and acceptance of the 'ways of the hosts' are key to their survival. They need to evaluate where they are, what the general rhetoric at the time

³⁶*Romni* is a female Rom. It can also be translated, depending on the context, as a married woman.

³⁷ *Kaldarash* and *Erlia* are the appellations of two different sub-groups of Roma with distinctive dialects and cultural practices (these two groups can be known also with other names)

is, the people they interact with and to make sure they calibrate their own ways so that they are able to survive and be part of that society.

“I had an instance. I am going to work [and] my boss comes [...] two hours after me. He parks [his car] and goes to buy a coffee. I ask him ‘why are you going to pay for it? Upstairs it is free’; the boss: ‘how do you know?’ so I tell him ‘my first job is to ask where can I park for free and the second thing to ask is ‘where is the free coffee machine’ He [his boss] is asking ‘You have integrated so fast? [...] you have become almost Dutch!’; ‘I have to!’ (laughing).” (Informant 28, male, Montana, 40s)

“They jump a lot and I started dancing like them. [Locals asking] ‘Where did you learn how to dance?’- ‘I don’t know! I saw how you dance!’” (Informant 69, male, Stara Zagora, early 20s)

If we are to get a glimpse into the world of Roma migrants, we are encouraged to try to live it fully and experience it. As Soja (2007) argues, this is a necessary part of how we should seek knowledge. Correspondingly, neither non-Roma nor non-migrant Roma alike would be able to fully grasp the world, experiences and identities of Roma migrants. Immersing himself fully into the society of the Netherlands has enabled Respondent 28 to learn that it can only benefit him to feel part of and to live fully in that society. Thus, he is doing his best to adapt to the ‘Dutch ways’. Even though born in Montana and living in the Netherlands for about eight years, Informant 28 has already obviously started to benefit from his adaptability and willingness to integrate and this has been recognised by his Dutch employer. In many of their narratives interlocutors also shared their free nature, their openness to new and better opportunities and their perceived readiness to change and adapt. This adaptation is recognised as an asset, rather than a threat to their intrinsic Romani identities, while the opportunities which are open are appreciated as great untapped potentials.

“Earth belongs to man. I mean, you are born on Earth and therefore it is yours. And each and every place you need to accept as yours. In this way, [it is not good] for you to say that you are born in Bulgaria and therefore in life and death you have to stay in Bulgaria because you were born there. At the same time, [if] there would be a very good opportunity for you to go to, say Germany, and [because you were born in Bulgaria is a good enough reason] for you not to migrate – that would be stupid. It is stupid! A person has to adapt; that is very important.

I don't know [in a light mood] I am like this. I adapt very quickly. That is what I am trying to say to you. [In England] I got used to it in one week. I mean to say that after a week I did not mind the fact that I was in a foreign country.” (Informant 11, female, Sofia, early 20s)

As we can see from the passage of Informant 11, who related her experiences of her stay in London, we can see a link between her narrative about what could be a Roma and at the same time what makes her feel like one. Seemingly, there is no obvious contradiction and she has been describing her own experiences and observations about her ability to appreciate many countries as hers, simultaneously, as she is born on earth and also the fact that in about a week's time she has started to feel at home in London.

“We are more compassionate... we have simple love (простовата любов имаме). Our love is so penetrating, so pure and I don't know... We have love. We have love towards everybody. I may feel like a Czech, like a Greek, Bulgarian, and like any other because we have a heart for everybody. We don't have in our consciousness that we are more than the rest; in our consciousness does not live discrimination, hate, separation, there is no such a thing. In our consciousness is only to show love.” (Informant 60, male, Stara Zagora, 30s)

Again, one could appreciate the emotions of Informant 60 which are sincere enough to spread his love towards all people, cultures and countries. This openness and love towards everybody, furthermore, is genuine and liberating and it has allowed him to learn from various countries and feel them as his own instead of being rigid and close-minded. Such a way of living could be appreciated as an ability or 'art' and one of the characteristic features which have allowed many Roma migrants to live and survive in all different nation-states. Furthermore, it is appreciated by many as an intrinsic Romani feature and a great asset and secret for their survival.

“You cannot live like a Bulgarian [in Italy] – it is unthinkable. That is very important – to go somewhere and to change. That is good. You get adopted quickly. You have no problem. He (the Roma) changes according to the circumstances. You adapt wherever you are. However, the Roma adapt quickly. They do not have problems with that.
[...] The Romskoto [Romanipe] is being used abroad. That is our strong feature, because we the Roma adapt quickly. Their mentality allows them that thing. They can always survive there. We can survive!
The characteristic Roma feature will not get lost. [...] I mean to say that the Romsko is being preserved; and they offer it abroad.

We the Roma have to survive and we learn to survive. I do not see a Roma waiting for a politician. There is no such a Rom. You speak with how many you want – there is no such Roma. I do not rely on a politician, nor to my country. By us, the Roma, there is no such a thing – we rely on our own selves.” (Informant 61, male, Stara Zagora, 40s)

“That is what I mean by integration. We the Roma started integrating by ourselves; we don’t wait for anybody to integrate us. That is why more or less because, in being abroad, the mentality changes because they see how life is, what the situation is there. So they are doing their best to seek this life standard.” (Informant 58, male, Stara Zagora, 50s)

“There are no Bulgarians to tell you, come here, let me make you a person [figuratively speaking, let me teach you how it is supposed to be done]. You need to find out how to survive. They look at life in a contemporary way. There is so much we can learn from Europe – a lot, a lot!” (Informant 59, male, Stara Zagora, 20s).

What the narratives of the three interlocutors above demonstrate and share in common is the recognised potential that the different countries offer and their active approaches to life. While abroad, they have managed to learn, experience and see things which they have never known before their travels abroad. As Informant 59 has realised, “there is so much we can learn from Europe” and that in order for him to feel as a contemporary youth, he is ready to do his best in order to feel an integral part of the current age. Thus, many Roma have long recognised that it is their own responsibility to help themselves, rather than rely on certain countries with their policies or politicians.

The term “art of living” is borrowed from Liegeois (2007, p.95). It was chosen as it well fits the worldviews of many of the informants to life and the approach for their survival in it. Also, it adequately describes the way Roma are in the world and in handling their lives, rather than just providing narratives of what should be done. They have seemingly taken an active and independent approach and also appreciated the potential within these open societies and in a globalised world. Furthermore, Roma have learned they need to be brave, ready and flexible enough not only to survive it but also do and live it with fun, joy and a positive outlook which allows them to live it fully. Thus, very often, against narratives of assimilation, Roma have appreciated the great potential of being abroad while still maintaining their Roma consciousness and ‘ways’. This is because the self-consciousness and

perceptions of Roma remain; they believe there is very little which could be done to eradicate their Roma identity and they believe they need to stay true to it.

“We are us to a certain extent (ние сме си ние до някъде) in the different countries to a different degree... That is what makes me feel good – we feel freer.” (Informant 42, male, Montana, early 30s)

6.3.3. Selective multiculturalism and the Roma ‘ways’

As seen, the processes of migration add and complement the identities of Roma migrants as they experience new feelings which bring new dimensions to their realities. Nevertheless, a major part of them continue to see themselves as Roma. They believe that one is a Roma and stays one forever and that is something which is hard to eradicate. That is why, the term “selective multiculturalism” is seen as quite appropriate in our discussion of ‘Romanipe’, or what it is that Roma people themselves see as defining and ‘at the heart’ of their identities. “Selective multiculturalism” was used by Gropper and Miller (2001, p.107) in their study of American Maevaia Roma. What the authors argued is that Roma do not live and act in a bubble and isolated from society. Instead, they try and select what would work for them as Roma and how to adopt it in order to suit their own ideas and outlooks on life. Similar processes of selectivity have been observed within the processes of migration of Bulgarian Roma abroad.

As argued above, Roma migrants have realised that they ought to change their ways in a new space in order to be involved in the matters of societies they come across. What is being observed is that they make sure to balance between what they claim to be ‘typical’ for their ethnicity, but at the same time take and adapt to the ways of the host societies. Thus, there is a constant change and evolution in terms of their ideas, perceptions, and practices which should not be seen as assimilation to host countries, though a process of internalisation through borrowing and adopting them in order to suit their own prisms. Thus, the differences in observed practices of various Romani groups within the boundaries of a nation-state and between different countries should not come as a surprise.

The Romani identity could be compared to an ‘assemblage’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) – a collection of heterogeneous elements which come together in a unique fashion in a certain space and time. When abroad, Bulgarian Roma migrants evaluate what is important for them, and what ought to be preserved. For example, when it comes to commemorating and celebrating holidays, such as the national holidays of Easter, Christmas and New Year, Roma make sure to commemorate them. Yet they do not cease to celebrate what they perceive as typically Roma holidays such as Bango Vasili,³⁸ –the Roma New Year (celebrated on 13-14th January), or St. George’s Day (Herdelezi) (6 May). This is not to claim that these holidays are celebrated by the Roma across Europe. Moreover, these are holidays which are honoured and celebrated by non-Roma as well and their roots are traced to non-Roma origins. Yet, this is a great example of the adoption and continuation of past, often non-Roma, legacies and customs. What makes the Roma case interesting is their ability to combine different and various elements in a unique fashion and claim it for their ‘own’.

For example, the ways Roma in Bulgaria celebrate Bango Vasili or St. George’s Day can differ among the different Romani groups. Yet, abroad it takes on a new dimension. While in another country, Roma appreciate they need to mind the local laws and requirements and thus cannot slaughter an animal or gather together in big spaces as they are used to in Bulgaria. Instead, they purchase a bird for ‘The Roma New Year’, as the custom is to slaughter a bird like a goose, duck, or a cock, while for Herdelezi, they purchase lamb from the butchers instead of slaughtering it themselves in the open air. Their gatherings abroad are also usually limited to family and close friends – two or three families – while the music is quieter as they need to mind the privacy of neighbours who do not necessarily celebrate these days. While abroad, interlocutors shared that their Romani culture is being enriched while what is being lost are things which have been in fact deemed as undesirable:

“I only lose the ugly things [while abroad], those which I have been dreaming of losing because I don’t need them. For example, it is not obligatory when we are in company to drink and drink and then get up and dance kucheci [belly

³⁸ Bango Vasili is also known as Vasilitsa, Vasilovden, and communities can use these names interchangeably.

dance] and to start fighting in the end. Or such kinds of things – the ugly Roma behaviours... Or for example, you put the music on [maximum] volume [...] without considering neighbours... [Abroad] it is not like this - you need to pay attention to all this. [...] they bring us survachkas,³⁹ the kids survakat there... We have also done engagement parties, weddings not yet, however, engagement parties, birthdays... in a bar or in a restaurant - and there is music, orchestras, anything your soul longs for.” (Informant 39, male, Montana, 30s)

The quote above is a fair example of the adaption and evolvement of traditions. The example of the survachka has often been brought up by the respondents from Montana. This is an interesting example of a symbolic respect of the holiday and the way they decide to celebrate it. Survachkas are both used for New Year (1 December) as it is widely celebrated but also for the celebration of the Vasilitza (14th January) or what Bulgarian Roma consider their Roma New Year. This object is thus regarded as necessary in order for the proper commemoration of the holidays. In the cases when there is little presence of Roma migrants from Bulgaria abroad, or not a well-established Romani community abroad, migrants use their imaginations and make sure they create one themselves. Thus, instead of the traditional cornel they use what they could find in order to continue the customs and ways of celebrating it:

“My niece always used to come with her kids to survakat. Last year, interestingly, we didn’t have survacha, so I went to a 500 year old tree – the one for the cacao. I took a little green branch and that is how they did it.” (Informant 34, female, Montana, 50s)

To continue the narrative of adaptation of traditions in other spaces, we have some interesting examples of a combination of holidays or hybridisation.

“On the 6 May, it is Gergyovden and we are in Netherlands – we celebrate it there. On the 6 May, I took the Dutch flag – a quite big one – took it from here to the city centre. The guy was playing music and we were dancing the horo. That was in Rotterdam. They [the locals] know it and call it a fest. This is a Bulgarian holiday, however, you get the Dutch flag.

We had the Dutch flag and were dancing the horo. You are in Netherlands, so you adopt their flag, but you celebrate your own holiday. On the other side there were Italians, Turkish, and the dancing is interesting for them. The horo dance

³⁹ Survachka (сървачка) is an ornamented cornel stick which, in an old Bulgarian custom, was used by young children to lightly hit the backs of the adults in the family with wishes of health, joy and for a fruitful year.

is interesting in itself but for them it is unusual. They see these moves for the first time. So, even though we are far away, it is as if we are here. As if we are here. Your heart is here.

The rakia, the beer. I found an Arab shop – no pork there; or I go to the Turkish shop. I ordered 34 lambs. So, I told the guys from the mahala – ‘if you want good lamb you go there’. The guy brings it and you choose what you like. There are Serbian ovens which roast them in whole pieces. So, we get together. If it is only me and my son and my wife – it is not happening. We get together four or five [families].” (Informant 33, male, Montana, 50s)

The narrative above is quite salutary because it captures the birth of a process at its very inception. We are able to see in the narrative above the ‘art of living’ and a hybridity in which several important, for the Romani migrants, elements and variables are combined to create a new experience, reflective of the old, in their daily lives in a new space – Rotterdam. It is laden with three main factors. Firstly, as Bulgarian citizens, they feel Bulgarian and certain holidays and celebrations resonate in them, such as celebrating New Year, Christmas, as well as the customs which have been borrowed by the Bulgarian folk. Thus, dancing the horo⁴⁰ – a collective dance in which participants form a circle, a line or other formations – is a custom which could be directly linked with the practices in the lands they have lived in for generations. Secondly, as Roma, they have adapted the holidays so that they uphold their Roma identity by also playing the music and rhythms of the Roma. And thirdly, the new space they happen to occupy has made them adapt the ways they celebrate and sustain their identities even more. Now, instead of taking the Bulgarian flag, the Roma in Rotterdam take the Dutch flag. However, in dancing a typical Balkan folk dance, the horo, their Romani identities do not diminish but have a specific and peculiar taste and nuance. Furthermore, they have learned that for what they perceive ‘holy Roma’ holidays they are no longer able to slaughter animals as they used to in Bulgaria, though they have found their way by locating Arab butchers and decent Serbian ovens in which to roast their lamb. Further, the purposeful search of preparing the meals, and the ways they begin to celebrate various important occasions are yet another great indication of assemblages, or combinations, of ingenuity and improvisation.

⁴⁰ Horo – is a characteristic Bulgarian folk dance but it is also performed by other cultures such as Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, Greek and it is known with other names. In Bulgarian lands there are different types and styles of horo.

In the few cases when there were mixed marriages, the preservation of culture and Roma 'ways' were perceived as values which ought to be preserved. Thus, non-Roma brides were expected to acquaint themselves with the values of the Roma family as well as the customs and important celebrations.

"[...] there is no way for us to combine it with the English because this is typically our Bulgarian or Cigansko – that which we know from our parents, the elderly, who have stayed behind. You know, the father will get in, he will survaka – we even did that in front of the Englishwoman so that she could see how it is done. She was [in Montana] on Vasilovden. We slaughtered the goose [in order for her to see how we do it and learn...][for St Nichola's Day⁴¹] I have been wandering around looking for fish along the river Themes for 12 km while I was there – a fish market. On Cvetnica I went looking for a willow for 6km with the bike – looking for willow." (Informant 35, male, Montana, early 50s)

The narrative of Respondent 35 exemplifies his will regarding the importance of preserving and respecting the holidays. The holidays his family honours are Eastern Orthodox, Bulgarian and Roma and many Roma respondents try and make sure to honour not only these but also local holidays while they are abroad. Since some of the factors for the proper ways of celebrating certain holidays are missing many of them do their best to adapt them and improvise but still keep its spirit of the events. Also, as the quote above demonstrates, Interlocutor 35 is eager to teach his new English daughter-in-law 'the ways' things are done in his family, the relations between family members and extended family and friends and neighbours. According to his own narrative, they have been planning to make the wedding in their native Montana, mostly because of the new daughter in-law and more precisely in order for her to learn and realise the values and the ways of their Roma ethnic group.

The change of the Roma ways is quite subtle and reasoned. Since they have been living in close proximity to the host societies, they often express curiosity about the local customs and holidays and even join them in their local celebrations. The Roma do not live in a bubble but quite on the contrary, they are eager to learn and adapt to the local ways. Thus, we have got many examples of Roma joining, adapting to the

⁴¹ In Bulgaria for St Nichola's Day (6 December) households have fish as a signature meal and as a way to commemorate the holiday.

locals, then internalising it as part of their own while in the new spaces. As an example, a recently returned migrant from Italy managed to introduce a fashionable trend by wearing scarves for boys. Wearing scarves by males, as he explained to me, in the Romani neighbourhood in Montana used to be associated with femininity and therefore could be the source of ridicule and mockery.

“[From Italy I got] only certain things – I got moccasins, hats, gloves, scarves – that which I saw was a fashion. I even introduced a fashion maybe three year ago. I introduced a fashion with the scarf. Before that, everybody who wore a scarf was [considered] a pederast, a gay, or something of the sort. However, when I introduced the scarf, they said it is something interesting and they saw it was fashionable now – because the Italians dictate fashion in principle. [...] Then they started to buy scarves from Holland, Italy, Denmark. So, I just introduced one scarf here in the mahala and in a week everyone had a scarf. A friend of mine saw me with the scarf and he liked it a lot. He even went to the Czech Republic as a representative of Bulgaria – the Bulgarian Roma – representing them in Czech Republic – there was something like a grand gathering where different European Roma came together” (Informant 46, male, Montana, early 20s).

The quote above is a clear example of a culture of migration and the internalisation of a fashion by the Roma. They have liked the new trend, approved of it and, as the case above exemplifies, even used it as a “representation” of Bulgarian Roma abroad. It also supports the idea that Roma adopt and adapt with ease and are open to new trends and fashions which changes ‘their culture.’

“Any new fashion which comes out – my kids are the first one to wear it. Both in Poland and here [Bulgaria]. If something new comes out, I buy it by all means – for me or for the kids.” (Informant 63, female, Stara Zagora, 50s)

“In general, we the Bulgarians, the Roma, we know how to dress.” (Informant 59, male, Stara Zagora, early 20s)

These quotes seek to illustrate the ease with which respondents relate with new trends and artefacts in contemporary Europe. They are not afraid to be in the world and feel fully in tune with fashion, music and behaviour. Many Roma shared their readiness to experience and learn from the host culture, but at the same time honour and stay loyal to the ways they are familiar with:

"We [celebrate] everything. Look what we celebrate – the Ciganski, the Turkish, the Polish and the Bulgarian – these traditional holidays we celebrate. New Year is not our holiday, it is a Bulgarian holiday – we do it. Vasilyovden is a Ciganski holiday and we celebrate it. Bayram – a Turkish holiday and we celebrate it. We celebrate the Polish Easter and we celebrate our Easter.

Interviewer – "How about the way the Polish celebrate?"

"There is no way you will not celebrate because they give you a couple of days for rest. When the female boss comes...and says 'today we have a holiday'. So, what we do is prepare food, the grill, [...], we play music and we start dancing – we dance with the female boss, with the Polish when they are around us – that is how it is. They explain to us what kind of holiday it is." (Informant 63, female, Stara Zagora, 50s)

The narrative of Respondent 63 is one which is characteristic of other Bulgarian Roma abroad. They find themselves increasingly adopting the festivities of the host societies, cooking their cuisine and also doing what the locals do in general. It could be also said that they do not fail to internalise the things they like and continue it as a tradition of their own.

"I make the Paella. I make it the best. I even make it better than the Spanish. I bet with anybody. [...] I beat the Spanish on [cooking] the Paella. I cook it much better than them. They were assured themselves. Because they were my guests. I even brought the large baking dishes/trays here [Bulgaria]. Only the material is missing." (Informant 12, male, Sofia, 60s)

"The idea is born because my world-view is like this. It is not Bulgarian but Ciganski, European of some sort. It is not that I have seen from the West. [...] That is what my fantasy gives birth to. I do not copy from anywhere. I am a painter by nature. So for a painter, there is no difficulty to make their yard paradise-like; to make an English yard; grass, tales, a small fountain, water, to know how to arrange the pine-trees and so forth.

[...]I like it, it is pleasing to my eye – the Western style, of this paradise. I like it a lot. I fancy it, it is pleasing my eye. My eye, however, is greedy/voracious. It is because my eye is a little more gifted compared to the one of the Spanish, the French, of the whole world. I have my own vision. So, I have made many remarks to Spanish friends of mine: 'Why is that here? Do that this way; this will be more beautiful this way.' So, if they take my advice; because in most of the cases my friends do take it, they say 'Yes, yes, truly it is very beautiful. Truly, it became more beautiful this way!' So, I do not take; I do not copy anything from them. Everything is mine. Everything is in my fantasy. The fantasy I have, I go and see it abroad. However, my fantasy is broader than the one I see. So, I do not copy anything – everything is mine. I have my own vision." (Informant 7, male, Sofia, 60s)

The last two quotes were selected in order to give a conclusion of the discussion in this last section. I found them quite poignant as they both share the uncommon take of Roma towards life. By being abroad, Roma manage to expand their vision, open their eyes and get further inspired. It seems it opens many doors for inspiration and life choices, which they manage to borrow and expand on 'their own Roma' level, and which could no longer be fully credited to the local hosts as it is being used by the Roma. This is what makes the study of the Roma absorbing and inspiring. As Informant 7 put it, it does not take much for an artist to create a good piece of work and this could be further applied to their art of living. The examples above sought to give a snapshot of a Roma way of combining elements and the creation of a 'rhizome' or mosaic which is unique to its own. This bricolage, many Roma fail to see as genuine to any particular culture or country and that is what makes them feel as Roma – the ability to be selective towards the things they particularly like and to present in a 'genuine Roma' fashion. These processes and styles seem to be in a constant state of creation and becoming and this could be accredited to their travel and mobility.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter sought to give an analysis of the identities of Roma migrants. It was argued that Roma identities are constituted on three main levels. Firstly, they seem to be a reaction to the widespread labels and perceptions about the Roma which have been generally portrayed, in the negative, as stable and rigid. Thus, many Roma have realised the need to hide their origins but they are also eager to resolve their differences and peculiarities as this one-sidedness hinders their life prospects, both in their homelands and abroad. This reaction has managed to encompass many Roma and make them act as one whole body as it aims to counter these master narratives and labels, thus creating an 'Us' versus 'Them' narrative. Secondly, Roma seem to have internalised the labels attached to themselves. Therefore, not different to non-Roma, they sometimes distance themselves from and Other Roma groups which are not part of their own. This is due to fear, mistrust and lack of proper exposure to these groups. Thirdly, it appeared that certain qualities and traits which are deemed as 'negative', such as stealing, being an outlaw and having a poor upbringing, act as points of Othering, rather than certain ethnicities or groups per se.

The processes of migration have materialised some great discoveries for Bulgarian Roma migrants. As a result of them living in new and greater spaces abroad, their identities begin to transform as they morph into new hybrid shapes and add to their bricolage. They have the willingness and are ready to be fully involved in the societies they inhabit and do anything possible in order to become part of these societies. Thus, Roma migrants have demonstrated flexibility and an 'art of living', but without forgetting about their Roma identities. This is all remarkable, as they have demonstrated receptivity and the combination of the ways of the local hosts with those of their original hometowns, and, at the same time, what they consider 'typical' for them as Roma. Therefore we could observe constant processes of selectivity and thus consider the Romani identity as 'Romanipe' in a continuous process of becoming.

Chapter 7 Eye-opening Processes: The Culture of Migration

7.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the migrant experience. It will therefore explore some of the personal stories of the informants contributing to this study. There was a need for a discussion of the life-changing and inspiring stories of some of the interlocutors which have been insufficiently addressed in earlier chapters. Thus, this chapter seeks to add more to the discussion about the reasons and effects of Romani migration, and the inherent feelings of belonging and identity. It will tap into the lived experiences of some of the informants and will argue that migration is a process which has resulted in the creation of a 'third culture' due to the emergence of a 'culture of migration' among Roma in Bulgaria. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it will seek to demonstrate why there is a 'culture of migration' by exploring some of the facets which characterise it. Secondly, it extends the discussion to follow the consequences of the 'culture of migration' and the emergence of this 'third culture', which altogether contribute to the ways they see themselves in the world. Due to the relative novelty of their experiences inherently due to 'culture of migration' and the emergence of the 'third culture', this shows a new side of their identities and character; processes which this work has coined as 'eye-opening.'

Some of these examples cannot be said to be representative of all Roma migrant experience, however. It is through the stories of individuals that narratives are born and this work seeks to bring to light individuals' understanding of their migrant experience. Roma relate their experience as a range of complex social and personal transformations which can be characterised as disturbing and confusing and at the same time liberating.

7.2. Migration as a social process and the “culture of migration”

Relevant to the Bulgarian Roma informants involved in this work, the concept of the “culture of migration” (Kandel and Massey, 2002; Elrick, 2008) was chosen as an appropriate analytical tool for this current chapter. Today, there is a predominantly economic and political emphasis when studying the migration of Roma. Instead this chapter seeks to concentrate on and study the socio-cultural changes in their places of origin.

The culture of migration is a process which “changes the values and cultural perceptions in ways that increase the probability of future migration” (Massey et al. 1993, p.452). It is also seen as a process which changes tastes and motivations (Piore 1979). Elrick (2008) applies the term to the Polish context and takes a deep look at three main facets which inform the conceptualization of this culture of migration. The **first** is seen to refer to the transfer and exchange of cultural values, information, goods and technologies. Over time, migrant communities become culturally “transnationalised”, incorporating ideologies, practices and expectations from both the sending and receiving countries to create a culture of migration that is distinct from both societies (Elrick, 2008, p.1504). As a result, there is an emergence of a “third culture” which is seen as the fusing of imported and local cultures (Massey et al 1994, cited in Elrick 2008, p.1504). The **second** facet of the “culture of migration” refers to the norms, values and ideologies of the community that observes the migratory processes and thus attaches value to these processes. Therefore, members of the community can regard these highly and with esteem, or renounce and reject, the decisions and actions of migrants and non-migrants on the home country. That could be seen as depending on the individuals’ perceptions of migration itself and could be seen as a positive or negative phenomenon. The hypothesis here is that people receive cultural signals, rather than labour market structural variables, which are motivating and are the source of migration. The **third** facet refers to the social and cultural changes as a result of the fact that home societies have to adjust their ways of life to the absence of migrants from their original societies. That notion could refer to the adjustments in behaviour and the changes in the individual families, households or collective levels (Elrick, 2008, pp.1504-5).

Communities with high rates of migration experience cultural changes in all three facets, however, how much a culture of migration could affect the original society would depend on the level of interaction between migrants and the host societies (Pores and Zhou, 1993, cited in Elrick, 2008), and thus how they are influenced by new impressions, values and ideas. These are seen as different from the economic remittances and are also known as “social remittances” (Levitt, 2001, cited in Elrick 2008, p.1504).

As seen earlier, Bulgarian Roma migrants have been migrating abroad as part of the general migratory patterns in Bulgaria. There were examples of Roma migrants migrating before the 1990s, but with the accession of Bulgaria into the European Union in 2007 and with the outbreak of the global economic and financial crisis in 2008, their travels abroad have intensified. It has been not only the general economic and financial circumstances in Bulgaria which have acted as ‘push’ factors, but also their inability to earn enough and survive⁴² in Bulgaria due to issues related with ethnic discrimination, exclusion, or lack of qualifications, training and education. As it turns out, nowadays Roma consider that migration is one of the only ways out of the situations they find themselves in, and unsurprisingly, the great part of the members of the Romani communities in Sofia, Montana and Stara Zagora have been abroad, have members of their families who are abroad and also can identify neighbours who reside and work abroad. All this supports the findings of a survey in Bulgaria in 2007 (Bulgarian accession into the EU) which commented that over 40 per cent of households in urban areas have at least one member of the family who has worked or is working abroad (Tomova 2011). As for the years 2014-2015, it is much more likely that the above cited figure is higher, especially with the lifting of work restrictions for Bulgarian and Romanian citizens beginning January 2015.

What this narrative and analysis is missing, however, is the social and cultural sides which migration brings. Even though the majority of respondents failed to see themselves as ‘changed’ in any ways, noting that they are the same Roma and they

⁴² The word ‘survive’ is being deliberately used here. It is the preferred word of many of the informants for the study. The reason for its use is also its connotation that people act both in rational and irrational ways when they need to make ends meet and pursue their most basic needs.

would not change regardless of the length of time they spend abroad. Half of the respondents spoke directly about the fact that Romani kinship is something which would never be wiped out or be forgotten. “A leopard can’t change its spots” or “Blood is thicker than water” is a Bulgarian saying which interlocutors quoted freely and readily when talking about their perceived Romani identities as migrants. Also, observing Roma friends, neighbours and relatives, interlocutors often noted that migrants, who predominantly reside abroad but decide to return to their hometowns once or twice a year for various reasons, are still the same and they will hardly change radically regardless of the length of time they spend abroad. Nevertheless, through their narratives it can be observed that their migratory experiences have left them with major imprints which have affected them strongly. It is not only that but they increasingly become eager and insistent to see and implement some of the ‘novel’ things from abroad in their home places. In such ways, one could see they become ‘bearers of change’ as they not only relate new stories, experiences and observations with fellow Roma but also try to experience, implement them and apply them in their Bulgarian ‘home’ settings.

7.2.1. Transfer of behaviours

One of the facets of the culture of migration, as described above, is not only the transfer of goods, commodities and technologies but also information, norms and cultural values. In other words, these are the intangibles which Roma migrants pick up from abroad and bring with them. One way to study the feelings of belonging of Romani migrants is to trace where they decide to invest, save their money and also envisage to access the benefits of their earnings in the future. Romani informants have showed a tendency to transfer goods and technologies, build houses and furnish them with commodities from abroad. What is important in this part of the analysis, furthermore, is the often unrecognised insights they get from abroad – this is the ideas from abroad that they have noticed and are eager to apply and translate in their home settings. One of the ways they demonstrate, implicitly or explicitly, their acquired identities, cultural values and norms is through the ways they design and furnish their homes. Now, they start to pay attention to things in their Bulgarian neighbourhoods which used to be taken and treated as a given, or by default, prior to their migrations abroad. Many Roma migrants begin to acquire a certain level of

behaviour, cleanliness and treatment which they have progressively become used to while abroad.

“Such kinds of things – which are normal abroad – having order and hygiene – here we have battles so that these things materialise; to change the situation a bit [because] we are in town and we cannot litter [like this]; we [as Roma] need to fight among ourselves - we have problems. There is no order. Order must be employed from above [the government] – then things will start progressing...”
(Informant 47, male, Montana, late 40s)

The traditional model of cleanliness in the Balkans, which can be especially observed among the Roma, is that hygiene should be maintained within the confines of one's home. Cleanliness outside, such as the yard and the surrounding environment is therefore considered as not a concern. It can be noticed now, with their migrations abroad, Roma have picked up the Western model where the idea of cleanliness is extended and reaches beyond the personal space of the home, reaching the surrounding neighbourhood.

The quote above is a good illustration of the transfer of norms by a returning migrant who lives in the Romani mahala in Montana. Informant 47 has travelled abroad for years and one of the things he would like to see in his hometown is a more hygienic and cleaner space. He has been acting as an active advocate for the installation of garbage containers for the residents in the mahala and has been in close contact with the Montana Town Hall. Furthermore, he has been lobbying for a person who would be officially employed by the local township in order to safeguard the way garbage is disposed of in the Romani neighbourhood. Through his travels, he has realised that living in a hygienic space is “normal abroad” and they should strive to achieve the same at home. The idea of what is considered as ‘normal’ has therefore been changed. He is now eager to see a transformation of his hometown and has been pushing hard towards not only for the removal of garbage to appropriate places but also the planting of trees and greenery around the Romani neighbourhood. It should be added that the main issue here is that it is not just a question of awareness about hygiene and cleanliness outside the personal space of home but one of an increased awareness of their rights and obligations which has been most likely influenced by their experiences abroad.

Littering, nevertheless, was one of the most obvious issues which Romani migrants have picked most readily. Very often they have been noting with disapproval the ways residents of the Romani neighbourhoods, but also Bulgarian citizens at large, have been littering and polluting the environment. Also, the lack of garbage bins in certain places has been seen as a criticism and shortfall which should be addressed.

“... garbage on the streets - we are not used to this [kind of] thing. We are no longer accustomed to it, you know? [...] When we see that there is rubbish there, it is not pleasant for us, do you understand? We are not used to it. Look! Where will you see this in Europe? [pointing it out to me] These containers collecting rubbish in such a way – everything is on the ground. If you leave the bag on the side of the container [in the Netherlands] and if someone sees you doing it, 150 euro will come to you as a fine. Or if you have put a jar inside; or if you have mixed the garbage and recycled it wrongly... you are not allowed to do that ...” (Informant 30, male, Montana, 50s)

Residing in places where it is clean has proved to be readily and positively received by many of the interlocutors. They have become so accustomed to the ways of the host societies that they find it hard to accept how things ‘normally’ are in their home places. It could be felt from the quote of Informant 30 that he has got used to the life in Holland and the system has taught him to follow the rules and proper ways of recycling to such a degree that he looks with disgust and rejection towards the status quo in the Romani neighbourhood in Montana. In this way, their simple ways of not littering and requiring a certain, or similar, standard of life start to translate in the Romani neighbourhood. Simple things such as disposing the rubbish properly seemed to come across as something very ‘normal’ for the migrants. The transfer of values, norms and perceptions could be well exemplified by the quote of Respondent 63 from Stara Zagora, who wants to teach her grandchildren about the things she has picked up from abroad and what she has perceived as good for the environment and the neighbourhood:

“When I am finished with my breakfast, I look around for garbage bins to dispose [of the garbage] there and that is how I teach my grandchildren. They take the paper and throw it on the ground [but] I make [them] pick it up and throw it in the bin.” (Informant 63, female, Stara Zagora, 50s)

The fact that migrants often find it hard to accept the way things are in the neighbourhood immediately portrays them as changed due to their travels. Many

informants, having spent years abroad, have realised that life could be more than they used to know. As a result, they begin to have new ideas of what 'normal' is. In this sense, we can perceive the emergence of a 'third culture' which is characterised with the novel way life is appreciated and what would characterise it as 'normal.'

"[...] I will carry any kind of rubbish in my hand for 100-200 metres. Until I find a garbage bin, I do not throw it on the street. That is thanks to what I learnt from the Dutch. The real integration is there. If you live here for 100 years, how would you integrate yourself? If a blind person is being led by another blind person – then both of them will fall into the pit. What is good that I see in an [ethnic] Bulgarian so that I get integrated? What could I copy from them?" (Informant 33, male, Montana, 50s)

"How can you not get used to such order? We got used to it so much that now we do not throw rubbish until we find a garbage bin. At least that is how I am. [My child is like this] as well. I told him the other day 'throw the paper away (on the street) as there is no bin'; He said 'mommy, I can't throw it away, I will wait until I find a bin'. You simply get used to it. There we found out how to recycle for the first time. They made us have three bins in our accommodation. [...] You get used to the order and you don't like it anymore when you see [things otherwise]." (Informants 31, female, Montana, early 20s)

Based on the two stories above, their acculturation shows the emergence of new preferences and value systems which are being passed down to the younger population. The things they learn due to their travels and residence abroad is often positive and empowering and indicate the emergence of a 'culture of migration.' That is what many of them saw as 'true integration' – being able to learn positive things from the host populations and appreciating their meaning and value. Living in a clean external environment was therefore one of the most immediate things which Roma migrants started to notice and regard positively. As they return to their home places they are hence eager to find and live in similar special surroundings. The emergence of this 'culture of migration' could be further supported by the narrative of Informant 34:

"Because those who have been/are abroad including young families – they throw their garbage the same way here. The elderly, however, go to the bin and throw it [on the ground]. That is a bad thing. [...]
But truly, there is a change [with] the Cigani – so that you know it! I am telling you – simply the behaviour; you see them... it is not like years ago when they were walking in town and talking loudly; years ago, if one person is on the opposite end of the street, they are [still] talking and you can hear them [from afar]. While now, this is not the case – people talk quietly." (Informant 34, female, Montana, 50s)

“I cannot say I am like a German [now] but I got accustomed... the music for example; the other day we were in company eating and drinking and I started speaking quietly and they started to laugh at me; because [in Germany] I am used to simply [talking] quietly. Simply, I am mindful.” (Informant 29, male, Montana, 30s)

In the Romani neighbourhoods or at the community level, migration starts to appear as a rite of passage. The feeling that in order for someone to be successful they need to migrate abroad is not new and that is one of the characteristics of the existence of the culture of migration because those who do not migrate can be seen as unsuccessful and or unable to uplift their social status (Massey et al. 1993). International migration is therefore not only a necessity but also becomes subject to peer pressure. This culture of migration was more readily observed in the Roma neighbourhoods in Montana and Stara Zagora, but less so in Sofia. The latter was probably due to the greater chances for earning and greater business opportunities in the capital city. Nevertheless, for Roma from Montana and Stara Zagora there seems to exist the general feeling that one of the sure ways to experience success and prosperity is emigration.

“At that time [before I went abroad for the first time] I had something like a jealousy. It was because everybody went and it was only me who did not go. So I said to myself ‘why don’t I go [as well]?’ I thought at that time that if I go there I will earn more; you know these were my observations...” (Informant 36, male, Montana, yearly 50s)

As previously discussed in the Belonging and Space Chapter, interlocutors from Montana often noted that while in places like Rotterdam in Holland, Ghent in Belgium, and other places they felt ‘at home’ due to the great number of Roma there and also due to the amenities they establish abroad. Because of that opportunity to socialise with fellow Roma and their ability to access foods and goods from Bulgaria, informants often related that they feel comfortable and they do not miss many things while ‘away’. In the summers, however, many return to their original communities to throw graduation parties, weddings and other major celebrations. This is a period when they reappear in the sending communities – when they are able to demonstrate their acquired social status to the rest of the migrants and those members of the community who have stayed behind. Again, the ‘culture of migration’ is apparent due to the transfer of commodities and cultural values. The

summer vacations are times when the space in their original communities is imbued with fresh spirits.

“Now they came back for the weddings. It becomes crazy here. It’s a big thing here, really! Every week there are several weddings – simply you are wondering which one to go to. The parties started [since June] – even up till now [the beginning of September]”. (Informant 36, male, Montana, yearly 50s)

“Over two months in the neighbourhood they have come back from all across Europe – from Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, from everywhere. Simply, when you get into the neighbourhood, there is life, there are people; you can talk to everybody. Now [in September] if you go out, there is nobody – only pensioners and elderly people – that is it”. (Informant 35, male, Montana, 50s)

“No, now it is livelier. I mean, look there were 11 weddings. He did a Christening... when people can afford it, they go around and enjoy themselves, you know? Good quality music started being ordered in the mahala – [the popular] folk singers [come to perform here], you know? It is not what it was like back in the day.” (Informant 30, male, Montana, 30s)

The three narratives above share the tone of excitement and revival in the neighbourhood in Montana with the return of the migrants in the summer. The fact that families are now able to afford and organise greater parties and celebrations is significant. Also, and equally importantly, people are now able to attend these celebrations. Organising good parties, and especially weddings, has a cherished place in the Romani tradition. Often, families save money during the course of their lives in order to be able to afford a prestigious wedding ceremony for their children or to provide them a good dowry. The ability to organise a grand wedding ceremony is an indication of prestige but also the number of people who attend it is of great importance. Now, people are not only both able to organise parties but also attend them without the previous worries about money. Attending celebrations such as weddings and birthdays is a sign of respect toward the organisers, though it is

expected for guests to offer a gift or dowry and an inability to give one is a fair reason not to honour the invitation. Due to the fact Roma are now able to earn and save money, they are now ever more able to organise and attend such celebrations, and can afford to pay for good quality musicians. Also, they see this specific time as merrier and better as the mood of residents is uplifted as they have less financial worries and are able to enjoy a better life.

Spaces within the sending regions are being changed not just through the transfer of new social rights, obligations and behaviour (such as ideas of hygiene and cleanliness) but also through the ways Roma migrants decide to perform and celebrate their cultural identities.

“I am observing them here [in the Romani neighbourhood]; they have bought their new cars... Colas and Fantas have been drunk here for 3 years! Nobody here knew what they were before. Everybody knew [plain] lemonade. When they were not working abroad who would drink Coke and Fanta? This is the truth! Have you drunk Coke and Fanta [asking another person sitting at our table who answers in the negative]? Alright, when [were you able to afford] a car [...]? You wanted to jump from the terrace for a pair of trainers [everybody on our table bursts out laughing].” (Informant 29, male, Montana, 30s)

Migration abroad has become so prevalent for the majority of the respondents that it is regarded as something completely normal and necessary. It is seen as a commonplace for all those who are able to perform work, and especially for the younger generation. This would all suggest a transformation of the original Romani communities as they become ambassadors and bearers of change.

In order to illustrate the emerging culture of migration let us see how participants consider their travels abroad. While conversing with them about their experiences, it was not uncommon for them to point out others who are migrants. “Look, she has been in Poland.” – this was the exclamation of a female informant from Stara Zagora in her 50s who confirmed the well-established culture of migration in the neighbourhood. Often, while the interviews took place, I was surrounded by other people who have also been abroad or knew well the context and meaning of my conversation with the migrants, or at least have heard it before through their own conversations.

“Interviewer –I see good houses; right here, over there [pointing them out]
Yes, they are all Ciganski houses. Across the street as well... the other [Romani] neighbourhood... Now, there are very few shanty houses. [in the background] ‘Oooo [naming the person], Que pasa, hombre!’ Look, these are Spanish. Here in Stara Zagora there is not one house whose owners are not abroad. Now, it is very quiet. [...] they are [all left] abroad [...]

Interviewer – Do you feel special now as you have been abroad, in a certain way?

No, because, everybody here has been abroad.” (Informant 53, male, Stara Zagora, 50-60)

The quote above shows the predominant tendency of Roma residents in the mahala of Stara Zagora to earn their living abroad. It has become so prevalent among the Roma there that they consider it being a migrant, living and earning one’s living away from Bulgaria as something quite ‘normal’. According to the narrative above, “there are very few shanty houses” is indicative of the nature of the culture of migration in the neighbourhood, which is transforming the mahala. Furthermore, Romani residents now come back and feel free to express their acquired identities by utilising the host languages. As we saw in the quote above, a passer-by greets a friend with the Spanish ‘Que pasa, hombre?’ This expression is indicative of the allegiance the passer-by decides to pay towards Spain, expressing his identity, and at the same time, he has the expectation that he would be well-understood by the friend he has just met on the street. As a result, there is the evolution of a new dynamic in the Romani neighbourhood, the creation of a new environment and transformation of the space in the Romani mahala in Stara Zagora. Now, besides utilising the native Romanes and Bulgarian languages, it is not rare that Romani migrants return and feel free to converse in the languages they have learned abroad or at least use some foreign words while in in their native places.

7.2.2. Transfer of Ideas; building houses

As the section above demonstrated, Romani migrants come back to their places of origin along with their newly acquired cultural baggage, ideas and experiences from abroad. Often, they begin to apply the things they have liked and learned from abroad in their own spaces. If they are not always able to change the common places around their neighbourhoods, they are now in a position to form and design their own spaces to new standards and according to their acquired identities and liking.

Migrants' homes often bear elements from abroad and take new shapes. As travellers, they are exposed to new ideas and things they get accustomed to and begin to like. Often, Roma migrants incorporate their acquired ideas into their own places consciously and knowingly but sometimes unknowingly and subconsciously. As the earlier chapters described, Roma migrants begin to learn new skills while abroad and most of the new activities they involve themselves with are appreciated as positive learning processes. As an example, some were able to establish own businesses abroad after acquiring enough experience. Many have been working as construction workers and their experience there has resulted in acquiring new skills and techniques for building. The abilities they learn and master are now applied in their personal spaces in their Bulgarian homes in various ways. Predictably, as they return to Bulgaria and when in charge of designing their own spaces, some Roma have demonstrated new styles of construction, architecture and design which have been inspired by their experiences and observations elsewhere.

“When you take a turn from here, [right] across [...], there is a tent on the top. They did this because they saw it from there [the Netherlands]. All [their] furniture is from there. The tent is from there. The backyard is from there. Everything is from there. They have made their house with an ‘English yard’, as they say it – enclosed. Inside there are palms, water fountains... it is very beautiful.” (Informant 35, male, Montana, early 50s)

There is also the example of a bakery factory which was established in the Romani mahala in Montana. What is significant about it was that it has been established by a returning migrant from Rotterdam who was one of the pioneers to go to Holland, as several informants from Montana attested. After having spent more than a decade abroad, he decided to invest a considerable amount from his earnings to set up a business targeting the local Roma in his neighbourhood. His intention was to bake bread, banitsa (баница)⁴³ and other local pastries. He demonstrated his allegiance to the host country by painting it reminiscent of the Dutch national colour and naming it ‘Café-Bar Holland’.

“A guy in the neighbourhood had opened up a factory for banitsa but he has gone broke after a year. Now he has gone away again. Here he cannot do

⁴³ “A traditional Bulgarian food prepared by a mixture of eggs and pieces of cheese between a filo pastry.” (Wikipedia, 2011)

anything. He invested half a million. I will show it to you. He has even named it 'Café-bar Holland'. An orange house. The Dutch flag is orange. He has made the house orange on purpose. He has invested millions but everything was in vain." (Informant 36, male, Montana, early 50s)

The experiences abroad have materialised in some great ideas and inspirations for many migrants. Dreams are born and original ideas come to the fore; respondents are less confined due to the greater freedoms they discover. The example above is one of the ideas which have been born and able to be applied in native Montana, even though it did not result in a fruitful long-term business. New inspirations are often based on the things they have discovered in other environments, and as a result they become eager to transfer, or re-create them in other settings. There is a learning process which Roma migrants experience abroad and it certainly reverberates in greater realisations.

"I have learnt many things from there. I have an idea for the future. If I were a bit richer I would open a small firm to make it their style – a construction business – because I deal with construction." (Informant 57, male, Stara Zagora, 30-40s).

The quote above exemplifies the aspirations of Informant 57, which was due to aspects he has been involved in while away from Bulgaria. Now, he feels enriched as he has some broad inspiration, ideas and newer visions.

"Their yards [abroad] are small like this and they put such kinds of things. We have taken quite a lot [of ideas] from there." (Informant 37, male, Montana, 50s)

"Yes, from abroad. You may see it – you can see the lion [up] there, the barbeques (laughing) in the end we copy something from abroad. Such kinds of things..." (Informant 62, male, Stara Zagora, 60s).

While conversing with some of my informants, I noticed unusual arrangements in their home settings. As I enquired about it, they often said with a smile, and sometimes pride, they have been inspired by observations and encounters they have had abroad. Informant 37 has learnt that he has created a cosy atmosphere in his small yard space due the ideas he has observed in identical small spaces while abroad. Thus, his family has been inspired by the yards they have come across while

away from Bulgaria. As a result, I found myself in an area with lots of greenery, flowers and ornaments which has resulted in a pleasant environment. Similarly, Informant 62 from Stara Zagora shared with a note of pride about the way he has chosen to arrange his backyard with stone statues and an area for grilling and cooking. Even though all these things could be seen among many others and even among non-migrants, these examples were given in support of the claim that ideas have been inspired directly from the experiences from their travels abroad.

“Interviewer - Does that have something to do with the Spanish style?”

That is exactly what I am doing, so that it looks Spanish. Where I used to live, the living room used to have two wooden gates. The same will be in my house [here in Bulgaria]. That is what I am looking to do, while here, whichever house you go into, each household... everything is identical. Absolutely everything – [the material that is used] is everywhere PVC and aluminium. They cannot appreciate that which is good. [...] Probably [many good things have] been available for a long time [in Bulgaria] but our Roma do not notice [them]. They have their own style. Do you know what it is like with us? When one does one thing then the others start doing the same.

Interviewer - So long as they like it?

No, like it or not, they do it!”

[another person in our company] “It cannot be that they have or do something while I don’t. (Те да имат, аз да го нямам)”

Exactly, that is what I wanted to say. When one does something, all the rest start doing the same.

Interviewer - So, they will start copying you as well probably?

Let them copy, but I doubt it (laughing). They don’t have such a style. They don’t have such a taste. They don’t have the same taste I have. I have been looking at it, having spent time thinking about it. So, I doubt they will like it... Well, I have been there for 10 years and there is no way I will not like it. Plus, [in Spain] they have many good things.” (Informant 3, male, Sofia, early 30s)

Informant 3 is eager to live in a home in Bulgaria which is borrowing heavily on ideas from the house in Spain he used to inhabit with his family. Even though he is certain that he wants to live and spend the rest of his life in Spain, he is building a house in his native Romani mahala in Sofia. He has decided not to follow what the majority of the residents do and the style they have, but to implement a ‘Spanish’ way of building and design. As he admits, it is impossible for somebody to live abroad and not get accustomed and attached to the life abroad. Even more, he has started liking the Spanish architecture and design to such an extent that he is eager to live in a similar house in his native Sofia. Informant 3 and his wife are so used to their place in Spain that they wish they could have a similar life and life-style in

Bulgaria. Even though that may prove impossible, constructing and designing their Bulgarian home using Spanish symbols is a way to remind them but also pay tribute and allegiance towards their past experiences.

“My yard is like an English yard – that is what the people [in our neighbourhood here...] say- ‘The English yard’. A better yard does not exist, because my worldview is Western, not Bulgarian. My neighbours’ [yards]... you have no idea what kind of hell it is – [...] chicken, pigs, dogs, ugliness, shit - with apologies – misery. My court, however, is something like the yard of a king. It is because I am a Ciganin and I have the qualities of good taste; because I am a European. I do not regard myself as a Bulgarian; I am a European. [...] Yourself, you see it. You are against the window and you see it and I hope you are enjoying it. The idea is born because my world-view is like this. It is not Bulgarian but Ciganski, European of some sort. It is not that I have seen from the West. I am a musician and I have played everywhere. That is what my fantasy gives birth to. I do not copy from anywhere. I am a painter by nature. So for a painter, there is no difficulty to make their yard paradise-like; to make an English yard; grass, tales, a small fountain, water, to know how to arrange the pine-trees and so forth.” (Informant 7, male, Sofia, 60s)

Informant 7 lives not in a Romani mahala but in a neighbourhood surrounded mainly by ethnic Bulgarians. He explains eagerly about the ways his travels around Europe have influenced the current state of his yard and his identity. He highlights that the way he has designed and arranged his yard differs radically from those of his neighbours as it is not Bulgarian-like but Roma. For Respondent 7, this Roma worldview is quasi-‘European’. Similar to the already discussed concept of ‘selective multiculturalism’ and ‘Romanipe’, Informant 7 has borrowed various ideas from abroad, and internalised them to suit his own Roma cosmos, thus creating something which is unique. Its uniqueness comes from the fact that it is not characteristic of ‘Europe’, nor it is ‘Bulgarian’. It contains a selection of different and various elements which have been picked in order to result into this current ‘Roma’ way. That example encapsulates the emergence of a ‘third culture’, which is not only a synergy between the different (host and home) identities and cultures but also something else which is not representative of either.

To summarise, so far, we have been trying to show why there is an emerging ‘culture of migration.’ We saw that there is a transfer of goods and commodities from the host destinations to the original communities. There is also a transfer of values and ideas and we saw how the West has managed to influence the ways Romani migrants

perceive themselves and their surrounding environments. Thus, they begin to care more about their roles and obligations in society, and are not content to find the old 'ways' of their original communities. Anti-littering, recycling and hygiene came across as some of the most immediate examples which were in evidence but also there is a transfer of skills, values and cultural perceptions. Many migrants have exhibited new ways of re-creating their own spaces by utilising imported building techniques, skills and ideas from elsewhere. It is also not uncommon that languages other than Bulgarian and Romanes are utilised in the Romani neighbourhoods and this is no longer judged or perceived as a bizarre practice because many of them share common experiences. Due to the predominance of foreign travel, residents in the Romani communities, at least in Montana and Stara Zagora, agree that migration abroad is a necessity if they want to keep up with the 'development' of their peers in the neighbourhood.

The issues developed up to this point and the topic of 'culture of migration' relate closely to discussions about the 'third culture' and hybridity which follow. Before this, however, are observations arising from the 'culture of migration' in relation to the Romani family.

7.3. Altered family dynamics

There is a delicate relationship between the 'culture of migration' observed in the Romani neighbourhoods, the role and significance of children and the ways informants feel. The underlying reason for migrants to set off travelling abroad, as already argued, is the urge to uplift their social status, to improve their lives and in order to provide better futures for their children. This whole process and quest affects the dynamic of the family however. On the one hand, we see that the healthy and desired connections between family members can be severed due to the fact that one or two of the parents need to find the means to provide for their children. On the other hand, due to strong emotional feelings to be connected and live together with their children, parents sacrifice their own comfort and interests for the sake of their children; they take decisions (sometimes against their will) solely to be united with their children. This section will try to support these arguments with examples from the empirical data.

There were many examples of families who had to live apart from each other. Sometimes, because of the fact that children cannot travel with their parents, they were left with other members of the family who stayed behind, such as grandparents, uncles and aunts. While there is a great willingness among Roma migrants to be united with their whole families, and even more so while away from Bulgaria, many families are not able to live together as one whole unit. There were many examples of Roma migrants who are abroad as that became the sole option to provide for their children. That is a reality which affects many parties and it affects the emotional well-being of children, parents and other kin.

“Now my (grand) children are at school and we need to buy this and that. I served them lentils today, so that we are able to buy them clothes and they can go to school; we need to get textbooks, clothes – can we send them to school dirty? My daughter-in-law has left them to us while she works in Poland. They used to study there, however, they don’t recognise [their Polish education] in Bulgaria. They studied for two years. [One of my grand-daughters] studied a preparatory year and first grade which she could not finish. Now she is in first grade again. Yes, we speak Polish, even the little one speaks Polish. She is 8 years old and she speaks Polish.” (Informant 66, female, Stara Zagora, 50s)

What many families recognise, however, is that while they are able to earn money and afford food, clothing and housing, there are many other vitally important things which they lose such as health and the proximity to their children, grandchildren, other members of family, and desired social contacts in their home places.

Husband –“We lose our health and our years – far from our kids and relatives... Sometimes the kids come, and sometimes they don’t. If this year [my son] is with me, the next he does not want to.

Interviewer – **How does it turn out – you are in Greece for 12 years, and for 12 years sometimes the kids come and sometimes they don’t?**

Wife –“from 2001. Exactly. The first 2 years they were not with us. Later they were with us for two-three years and later they stayed in Bulgaria again. They miss Bulgaria [...]. [My mother-in-law] is taking care of them. The youngest one was 12, the girl was 13, the oldest one was 15. Now, the youngest one is 21, the oldest is 25, my daughter is 23 - they grew up and we did not feel when they grew up. When did they grow up? We have got a grandchild and we are waiting for another grandchild. That is it – life in Bulgaria is difficult. Now the daughter-in-law is pregnant and we will have to go away. There is no other way!

I am leaving my children again, I am leaving my pregnant daughter-in-law, I leave my house... but there are many things which the house is missing. For example, the third floor needs to be furnished; I need some other things for the

yard; I have to spend for the new born grandchild; you need wood; winter is coming... it is necessity which makes you run (abroad).

Husband –“It becomes merrier for you, freer [in Bulgaria]; your soul opens up because you are surrounded by your children, your family and relatives compared to abroad.

Wife –“It is much better [being around] the children. I am telling you again – simply, you are better off, but financially only. You can afford to put everything on the table.” (Informants 64, husband and wife, Stara Zagora, 40s)

While in one scenario parents and children cannot stay together as it is a vital necessity for parents to earn money abroad, there is another scenario in which parents and children are united as they cannot bear to live apart. In this case the best interests of the children has proved to be the prime deciding factor which determined where parents would decide to settle. Thus, families had to decide whether they would stay in a certain place or not. For example, if they decide that it is better for their children to stay and study in Bulgaria, one of the parents stayed in their home places while the children pursued their education. In other cases, as migrants decide it would be better for children to study abroad, they decided to stay abroad mainly for the sake of the best interests of their children. The quote that follows is from Informant 7 from Sofia. His original country of destination had been Germany and he has been able to be with his wife and two children there. Here, he explains why he chose to return:

“I would never come back. It was because my son was with me [...]. He was small. ‘Dad, I will not live in Germany. I will live in Bulgaria. I am going back.’ His mother did not let him go, but I was sitting on the fence. Eventually, he pleaded with me, he cried to me [...] He asked me and I let him go. I gave him money, he bought a ticket and he came back here to Bulgaria. [...]. After six months, I came back, because of him. It is because we, the Cigani, are attached to our children. We are not like the Bulgarians – to be interested in our own gusto. No! Even though I was so well off; even though I had three cars, I had a house; every three months they changed my furniture – the Germans. [...] everything was splendid. It was like a fairy tale. A person would hardly believe it. [...]

After six months, I came back after my son. It was because I love my son. I cannot live without my son! I cannot! I took my small daughter who was nine months, ten, or eleven and I came back. I came because we, the Cigani, love our kids.”

As the interlocutor explained, his daughter was born in Germany and he had to travel back with his whole family so that he was able to be with his older son. Soon, after some years, the family migrated again to Spain, this time only with their daughter:

“[In Spain] they appreciated me, calling me ‘Maestro, maestro...’ but I could not [stay]. As I said earlier, we the Cigani, we love our kids a lot. It is not only me – all Cigani in the world love their kids. We are a very cordial/passionate nation. I came back because of my daughter – because she didn’t want to go back to Spain. It is because of my kids. Because of my kids – may God bless them – I am here in this cursed, miserable, I wouldn’t call it a country, a fake country. Seventh question!”

Here, we see the decision which Informant 7 has taken is emotional and impulsive rather than based on logic and reasoning. His irritation and regret about his choice seemed immense. He seems regretful for the fact that he had to put up with his choice and stay currently in Bulgaria while leaving behind a much higher social status, comfort and respect. That is probably why the informant wanted to carry on with our conversation with his urging “Seventh question!” Later on in our conversation, he wanted to stress again why he has chosen to spend his time in Bulgaria:

“Well, it is because of the kids, friends of mine’ (in a very loud and excited voice). We, the Cigani, are such a hot-blooded lot, that my children are young and they cannot reason that the West is West and with their kid’s brains they look for friends here; they cannot discern that when they grow up they will regret [their choice].” (Informant 7, male, Sofia, 60s)

Very similar is the story of Informant 53. Besides having his health deteriorate, one of the main factors for his return to his native Stara Zagora, after having spent more than 20 years abroad, is the determination of one of his sons to return and stay in Bulgaria. Similar to the story of Informant 7 from Sofia, where his children expressed their willingness to return to Bulgaria in their search to be in their desired social environment with family and friends, the eldest son of Informant 53 was determined to come back and, as a result, the whole family had to follow suit.

“The eldest [son] is the one to blame for us coming back to Bulgaria – he is here at the moment. He is the culprit ... Yes, we were together. He did not like it [away] he said his friends were here...he [said he] would get along well [with life], I don’t know what else; now, he is waiting for a loaf of bread.” (Informant 53, male, Stara Zagora, 50-60s)

Somehow similar is the story of Family 31 from Montana. The young parents have been working in a factory in Germany and have had the chance to take their son abroad. Their young child's best interest, however, has been the primary factor for the decision of his parents to stay in Germany first and later to return to Bulgaria. At first, the mother did not like or enjoy being and working in Germany. She has been missing her home for a number of years and could not put up with the fact that she had to stay in a foreign country, away from her close family, friends and environment. Things have turned drastically on their head, however, as she has realised that it would be in the child's best interest if he would be in Germany, as it would provide greater chances in life and greater prosperity. As a result, mainly because of her child, Informant 31 decided to put up with the discomforts of being a foreigner in Germany and to try to accept it for the sake of her son. The mother, subsequently, got used to the foreign environment to such a degree that she began liking it so much that she did not even want to return on her vacations. Later on, when it has been time for the child to start school, the family arrived at the major decision that it would be most reasonable for their boy to study in Bulgaria. Again, and for the second time, the mother decided to go against her own preference and start living in her native Montana. At the time of the interview, Informant 31 was in her native Montana. In her opinion, staying in her native place was accompanied with new and unexpected experiences due to the ways she has now begun to appreciate its ways. Now, even though she may dislike being there, she is determined to stay for the sake of her child. The relationship and the dynamics within the family are further challenged as her husband is abroad because he needs to earn and provide for his family.

This time, as the mother has started to live in her native town, things no longer look the same to her and she finds it hard to put up with many things. Here is some of her narrative:

“[Before I used to miss] ... even the smell here [Bulgaria] is different; the air – everything; I was even missing the silliness here, do you understand – the more simple way of life. There [in Germany] people are very different.... Later, I started thinking about my child because they sent me a letter about him starting school. As soon as [I received] that letter [...] I started to weigh up the options –

the pluses and the minuses; Bulgaria VS. Germany – no way, in Germany it is better. So I decided – ‘I will put up with that only because of my kid; I will put up with my job’, because I did not like my job; ‘I will put up with somebody else’s country; with someone’s house – renting for example; I will put up with everything.’ I could not even put up with the bed there. I wanted everything that was mine here [in Bulgaria]. So [...] somehow I tuned myself in such a way that at one point things turned completely on their head. From that point, I started liking many things.

The problem is that the kid is growing up and if we decide to go somewhere abroad, it would have to be forever. Simply there is no way he could study there for five years and then take him back in Bulgaria. Simply, that would be very bad for him. [...] In the end, it is all because of the kids – that is the whole point. Otherwise, we will easily find a job and stay there [in Germany]. I don’t care anymore.” (Informant 31, female, Montana, early 20s)

In order to support the argument that there is an emergence of a new dynamic in family relations due to the ‘culture of migration’ let us consider another similar example from Stara Zagora. Informant 71 has been earning a living in Greece and Italy, most of the time alone, in order to support her family. It became time for her to decide whether her child would study in Bulgaria or away, she decided to return to Bulgaria. Even though she has been able to earn well and afford a much higher standard of living abroad, as she relates, the sole reason she decided to return to Bulgaria was for the sake of her daughter.

“I am staying here only because of the little one because I want her to study. It is because if she graduates 8th grade there and I then bring her back here, their diploma will not be accepted. Let her know her own language. [...] I have dedicated my whole life to her.

I don’t want to stay [in Bulgaria], do you know I don’t want to stay? I don’t feel like staying here at all; however, I have a child and she wants to study, later [they] will say the Roma are uneducated, right?” (Informant 71, female, Stara Zagora, early 30s)

The last two examples are interesting as they illustrate the already altered family dynamics within the migrant families. We see a mixture between emotional and rational well-measured choices which seek to think through the best life options regarding the future of their children. Also, the examples give a good idea about the feelings of belonging of these interlocutors. Even though the son of Informant 31 from Montana and the daughter of Informant 71 from Stara Zagora could in fact study abroad, their parents have reasoned that when/if their children return in Bulgaria, they will face difficulties having their degrees recognised by the Bulgarian

educational system. This is indicative of them regarding Bulgaria as where they see themselves in the future.

This section showed the consequences of the 'culture of migration' on relations within the Romani family. This discussion will continue by studying the emergence of the 'third culture' among Romani migrants. This 'third culture' is a synthesis of the cultures of the host and the original societies and yet not typical of any of the two. In the next section will continue to argue that once migrants spend some time abroad, they become shaped to such a degree that they are moved and affected fundamentally.

7.4. 'Third culture' and hybridity

This section argues that due to their migration Roma begin to take different shapes. Major changes become borne out of the personal observations and experiences of migrants. These new impressions, because of migration, are so great that they culminate in the emergence of new, enriched visions and worldviews. The impetus for migration in the chapter on migration were primarily driven by economic and financial reasons, now as families and individuals are able to earn enough abroad and improve their lives they often arrive at new discoveries. These are so fundamental that migrants are able to see the world through richer and more powerful lenses. As a result, they become affected profoundly, even sometimes subconsciously. It seems that, for some migrants, their first outings mark the birth of their new personalities and as a result the ways they start to perceive and appreciate their surroundings and the world around them. The 'real eye-opener' for many of the informants of this study has been their chances to travel, experience and explore. The mere act of observation and living in different places has resulted in different realisations about life. Thus, this work would like to argue that migration from its very first experiences can be seen as a threshold which makes the migrant a different person and adds new layers to their identities and contributes to the emergence of more complex subjective feelings of belonging. Therefore, this section will continue the discussion to argue that Romani migrants' experiences affect the ways they choose to live their lives and appreciate the world.

Often, as a result of migrants' experiences abroad, their visions of life change. Many come to realise that there is more to life than they used to know as they have experienced it themselves. Many informants realise through their travels and lives abroad that life can be easier, more affordable, pleasant, and calm. Even though in the cases when migrants experience hardships they still manage to gain invaluable experiences, observations and life lessons which affect them in fundamental ways. All these experiences inform and enrich the identities, life-visions and the behaviour of Roma migrants.

7.4.1. Home places are appreciated as no longer the same

As a result of their new experiences a considerable proportion of the Roma migrants related that they no longer recognise their home places in the same way. Even though the majority of the respondents identified Bulgaria as their true place of belonging, many of them realise also that their return is a form of an illusion. This form of contradiction is informative in the context of this work. It shows that migrants' feelings of belonging become skewed and blurred once they spend some time abroad. As they now build new relationships, experience and learn new things, many interlocutors experience subtle changes which they find hard to describe. These changes also result in the ways they start to regard and see their places of origin. Nigel Thrift (2007) argues that, similar to a person's identities, places are always elusive, evasive and never stay the same. "The more one thinks about space, the less it offers" (Thrift, 2007, p.296). He maintains that we should consider places as alive and understood solely by living it and being there. Also, he argues that the world is complex, constantly changing, and "doubly incomplete" (Ibid, 317). As places come always with associations of the past, things no longer look the same for many migrants when they return. This is because they have acquired new identities, new visions and unique life experiences. Also, as their places of origin have taken trajectories of their own, while they have been away, it has become hard for many of the returning migrants to see it in the same way as they used to.

"Interviewer – When you come back, what do your friends say to you?"

My friends are abroad as well. All are abroad!

Interviewer – The neighbours, when they see you, what do they say?

No. My neighbours are alcoholics, drunkards; every night fists are thrown in the air; knives (laughing); [someone else in our company] – ‘they are not bored’ [laughing]. All in all, I feel better there.” (Informant 28, male, Montana, 40s)

For Informant 28, his home place is no longer the same, migration abroad has become inevitable for many in the Romani mahala in Montana. Since most of Informant 28’s close friends are abroad now there is little left which would hold him back. Furthermore, he has decided to distance himself from the people who have stayed in his native Montana. These residents Informant 28 now perceives as different and he does not feel comfortable in his native place anymore. There is a feeling of being ‘out of place’ as it is no longer the one which he would like to see himself occupying. It seems like there is a disconnect between the trajectories of the two spaces – the one which migrants used to occupy, their places of birth, and the one which they happen to occupy abroad.

“So many people have escaped [abroad] and when they come here they cannot survive – they live here for a bit and then they start to wonder how to escape [again]. You need to be very tough in order to live here in Bulgaria.” (Informant 47, male, Montana, late 40s)

“For example, the people who migrate for the first time and come back, they simply say ‘I cannot stay here any longer’. They cannot stay here for more than a week [...] Let’s say they come back for a break, in say August, to go to the seaside or to see their parents for 20 days. However, [soon after that] they start to say ‘Where am I living? ... God, I don’t want to live here! There you know your life, your everyday life, your job, people are different’...” (Informant 3, male, Sofia, early 30s)

“The bad thing is that with each and every year, I become more and more alienated from Bulgaria and it becomes more distant to me according to my ideas/visions about the future.” (Informant 22, male, Sofia, 40s).

7.4.2. Subjective feelings of belonging get blurred and challenged

All these quotes are similar as they convey that migrants no longer perceive Bulgaria as a comfortable enough place. There is a shift in the ways they see Bulgaria and it seems their native places are perceived to offer less. This is because they get used to

their lives abroad and they experience things which change them fundamentally. Therefore, there are emerging feelings of an internal struggle due to migrants' attachments to their host places and their 'new' ways of life. At the same time there are factors which drive them back to their native Bulgarian places.

Informant 22 from Sofia, for example, is consciously aware of the changes in his perceptions about Bulgaria. Over the years, he has been returning to his native Sofia in order to do work around his house, furnish it and transfer the things he has been dreaming to possess for a long time before he was a migrant in Germany. Even though he is now realising his dreams, he is no longer as eager to stay put in his native place and enjoy his new possessions. The excitement of the return has been diminishing as years pass and he is no longer as thrilled at the thought of the return to Bulgaria in the summers. On the contrary, now he becomes excited to return to his life and his place in Munich. The mismatch between the two places, Bulgaria and Germany, or Sofia and Munich, could be explained due to the things which the two places have to offer for Respondent 22. With their stay away, migrants increasingly add new layers to their identities and new visions which could be met in the other places. Bulgaria proves not to be a place where migrants want to see themselves in the future, as it cannot satisfy their immediate (or long-term) visions and needs. Consequently, many informants shared their new life-realizations and often their alienation and distancing from the general life in Bulgaria.

"To tell you, people have achieved a lot – they have big nice houses, they achieve; [however] those people who come from Poland cannot live here in Bulgaria. They wonder how the rest [of the non-migrants cope to] live [...] They want to go back [abroad]." (Informant 72, female, Stara Zagora, 50s)

Regardless of the fact that most of the informants build their houses and harbour secret images of their future in Bulgaria, supported by the evidence of the transfer of goods and commodities and parents' concerns about the recognition of the educational achievements of their children, for example, there seems to be little which is really able to hold migrants in Bulgaria. Massey (1991) argues that there are no essential qualities to any given place or space and that all identities are derived from the relations between places. Thus, space becomes "a meeting place," where relations interweave and interact and thus conflicts can emerge as they compete for

spatial superiority. Earlier on in this chapter we saw that when migrants return to their native places, they want to see and experience some of the things they have already become used to in their host places, having discovered easier lives. They are able to earn and save money and afford desired commodities, which result in other and greater experiences and expectations in their lives. Migrants uplift their social statuses and thus start to realise that there is more to life than they used to know prior to their foreign travels. All these result in enriching their identities and life realisations. As they return to their native places, migrants realise that relations between people and the way they behave are not the same anymore; life is even harder and also fails to offer what they are increasingly getting used to (as migrants). Thus, at those times when they return to their Bulgarian spaces they express frustration, disagreement and disappointment regarding some of the realities they come across. With their increased social status and improved finances, many of them then start to notice a better sense of well-being which has the power to transform their visions for life.

“I feel [Holland] close. Their nation is very kind. It is a nation which fears God. I have never been to another western country and it is possible to be the same in other countries, however, where I am especially, and that which I see – as a people and nation – they are a symbol of what I am reading in the Bible. What a person should be with another person – to respect the person [...]” (Informant 33, male, Montana, 50s)

The feeling of well-being for Informant 33 above is informed by the relationship and attitude of life which he comes across in Rotterdam. He has experienced and been living in an environment which is seemingly perceived as very pleasant and enjoyable. He carries on to talk about the positive outlook of the local host people and as he reflects about his native place, he finds the current and predominant ‘ways’ in Bulgaria as different, undesired and even alien. Thus, he dreads the thought of returning and living in his native Montana:

“[In Rotterdam] people like jokes. They like jokes, they are smiling – this is exactly what is missing in Bulgaria. [...] Out of two persons, three are ill in Bulgaria. When you start with insomnia – because they are worried about tomorrow; nobody knows what tomorrow will bring; they are worried because of lack of money. They know that bills will come. How will they pay the bills? With what money? How will they buy medicines? A person prefers to be with less food, but not without medicines. [...] – that is what can be found in Bulgaria – hunger and misery.

And, God forbid, we will come back [and start living] in Bulgaria any time soon. I love life. When I come back in Bulgaria I want to have a respectful – a worthy life – like the Dutch, like in the Western countries, like every person. Not like an animal – in Bulgaria, the person is an animal. [...]

Why do I have to go and dig through the garbage? Why? Why would I not have the chance to take a shower at least twice? Why would I not have the chance to have clothes for a holiday? Good shoes? Why would I not go on a vacation somewhere for ten days? To be able to enjoy your children and grandchildren, to smile, to welcome a friend as guests – that you are able to treat them to something. Not to be embarrassed, not to be ashamed; not to be starving.” (Informant 33, male, Montana, 50s).

As one could see, there is a dissonance between the lived experience of Informant 33 in the Netherlands and in his native Montana. As he returns in his native place, he re-discovers many of the factors he, his family and many other Roma have been seeking to escape. He has had the chance to learn personally, however, that life could be something else and different. Now, his native space has proved to be more difficult to appreciate positively enough, especially when he is able to see that there is another, easier and better option. The ways of life he has learned away from Bulgaria have been positive and liberating for Respondent 33. They are liberating since he has discovered that he is no longer confined within the boundaries of Bulgaria, but ‘free’ to enjoy a better life elsewhere. His visions and life-experiences have been expanded and he could no longer be satisfied with the way of life in Bulgaria, and he has realised what Montana still has to offer is insufficient for his newly acquired visions of life and well-being.

7.4.3. Yearning for another space

These new discoveries and memories, coupled with increased social status and a better quality of life, which migrants now increasingly come across, are touching for many of them and they affect their core beings forever. They become moved and affected by even limited encounters within the new spaces, to such degrees that they are able to recall them for a number of years, as these memories incite a positive and easy escape at any moment. It is therefore normal that migrants recall and yearn for the spaces and moments which they have found to be liberating, inspiring and pleasant.

Wife – “God does not let anybody die in a foreign country. [...] All migrant Roma when they come back [in Bulgaria] keep saying ‘what should I do here? Why should I come back?’ [...]”

Husband – “I liked a lot their weekends – in the Czech Republic, in Italy, – in all the countries I went through. I liked it a lot and I was envying them. Every Saturday and Sunday the mood of the people is, how do you say it, it is like when it is Christmas and New Year here. I am talking about the European countries from Serbia onwards; there people are completely different”

Wife – “They change a lot. Even the women who clean crap also come back changed, with another upbringing/new manners about [style and house] furnishings, about hygiene, about products – absolutely everything, everything! They have already started to have another vision. Even if she has been cleaning [toilets] she comes back changed; she has seen something new. One can clearly recognise it in her. [...] We are not talking about finances - the only thing which we liked, once we rule out that we don’t have money in our pockets, is that we feel like white people.” (Husband and Wife 37, Montana, 50s)

The changes which migrants experience abroad are of different kinds. They affect all aspects of their visions and transform each and every migrant. Even though migrants themselves might fail to recognise it personally, the ways in which they speak about how they perceive their home settings and environments, for example, indicate their newly enriched personalities, identities and the ways they appreciate reality. These changes are sometimes so profound that it upsets some of the migrants fundamentally. They are sometimes so moved by some of the stark differences experienced between the lived realities of Bulgaria and abroad that they cannot cease but be migrants. They want to be migrants and they put an effort by recalling and reiterating constantly the things they have found as enjoyable and pleasant. Their mental travels displace them and act as forms of escape. The West, for Informant 7 from Sofia, is a desired place. Similar to the observations of Informant 33 from Montana, as he describes Dutch people as “a people who fear God” or as an epiphany of what he has been reading in the Bible, and Informant 37, observing that “God does not allow anybody to die in a foreign country”, Informant 7 from Sofia portrays the whole West as a heavenly space which brings him profound peace and harmony.

“[In Bulgaria] I live as if in thorns. Do you know what is meant when a thorn pricks you? You gentlemen, I am asking you, those of you who are listening to me. Do you know what a thorn is? – It pricks everywhere. It is only one thorn but it pricks me everywhere. I am living so uncomfortably here in Bulgaria, even though my yard is paradise-like; as soon as I come out of my yard, I start

seeing the hell. What should I say to you? What should I say to you? I feel uncomfortable here. That is why I am waiting for God to heal/cure me now, to give me a little power so that I can run away; to go where my place is; where God has willed; to go to paradise - to run away from this hell.” (Informant 7, male, Sofia, 60s)

Life in Sofia has been very burdensome for Informant 7, as he describes it. It feels like a chore which is horrific and unbearable. He does not feel at peace and wishes he could migrate again if his health allows him to. What is key in this quote is the fact that Informant 7 refers to “[his] place” in a vast and vague way which is certainly not Bulgaria. He seemingly leaves it up to God’s will to take him anywhere else besides Bulgaria and he refers to it as a God-chosen heavenly place. What he means in fact about that abstract space, however, is the pleasant memories of the past which he has been able to enjoy along with his family. His feeling of belonging has thus been drastically challenged due to past experiences and the pleasant memories which do not leave him alone and give him peace after years spent in Bulgaria. The particular circumstance Informant 7 finds himself in currently, living in the comfort of his Bulgarian home, and the fact that he is in a position to compare his lived reality with others of the past (that of Germany and Spain) puts him in a permanent state of unease and in a mental state of thirst to experience them again. His earlier experiences and memories of the past act as sobering reminders for him, and many other migrants alike, that they are real and that there are other, available choices which they could make. These ‘other’ spaces have appeared to many of the interlocutors that they can offer more to them because migrants find more work opportunities, greater chances for prosperity and the uplifting of their social status but also, and equally importantly, peace of mind.

7.4.4. Deeper meaning of life required and humanity above profit

As becomes apparent, Roma migrants come to greater realisations of life due to their travels. These new insights result not only in the ways they perceive their native spaces but also what they would require to see in a particular space. Very often, when they return, migrants find their places of origin more difficult to tolerate as the relationships between people appear to be different than the ones from abroad. As

this chapter has been trying to convey, due to their experiences abroad, Roma migrants enrich their identities and become able to better appreciate what they would look for and search in life. What appears is that they are drawn towards places where they are respected, appreciated and treated humanely and with civility. One of the main reasons why informants find foreign places as positive and liberating is because of what they often refer to “feeling as a human being” or all the factors and human relationships which respect their human dignity.

“The smile of the Spanish ‘Hola!’ however, they say it with their hearts. I don’t know if you have seen it. Simply, this ‘Hola’ may be artificial, however, it warms you up. The person who is saying ‘Hola’ and smiles does not have breaks, while if I have to smile at a stranger and say hello it will cost me much because I need to release the hand-brake. Here, in Bulgaria we are on a hand-brake. [Abroad] there are no such brakes – there is a high speed and you change gear.” (Informant 41, female, Montana, 50s)

“...I see how [Roma migrants] become more mindful, more exacting/demanding. They smile and so on. They are used when going to the shop that clerks smile at them, to wish them a good day or greet them with a ‘Good day!’ when they enter. When they see that it is not the same [in Bulgaria] they insist that it should be like this as well [...]. I don’t like someone looking at me nastily, as if I have offended them with something.” (Informant 38, male, Montana, 30)

What the two quotes above touch on is an acculturation which many migrants experience. Subconsciously, they learn the ways of behaviour they come across abroad and get used to it. As they return and happen to experience another, different behaviour, they often characterise it as backward and lacking in civility. Thus, living again in their native environments becomes unpleasant and often hard to tolerate. Many Roma migrants thus feel there is little that is positive they could learn from their environment in Bulgaria, and see it as a milieu which would not benefit them truly in the long run. As they come back, even for limited periods, some of the predominant behaviour they come across is no longer considered as ‘normal practice’. In contrast, it has now started to appear as rude and repulsive. Thus, their home places in Bulgaria transform into another which is less enjoyable, hard to accept and put up with.

“...so I was simply disappointed; I did not buy anything and left [from the fragrance shop in Montana]. I left [the sales lady] the perfume and that was it. When we go to the supermarkets people are grumpy as well – the sellers and the shop keepers. All they look for is how to take your money and [then to] chase you away. While there [in the Netherlands] it is not like this. You can take, open everything and try whatever you want. If you like it you will buy it, while if you don't like it, you won't buy it. The same is with the clothes. You may go into a shop and try out absolutely all clothes in the shop and mess them around. Shopkeepers will come out and see you off, they will tell you 'good-bye' and nobody will tell you anything [bad about it]. That attitude I like again with the Dutch.” (Informant 40, male, Montana, 30s)

This was the narrative of an interlocutor from Montana who related about his recent experience and treatment as a customer in a fragrance shop in his native town. Now, as he has gotten used to another way of treatment as a customer abroad, the 'normal way' of dealing with customers in Bulgaria is seen as unpleasant and appalling for Informant 40. The bare quest for profit and money-making is no longer tolerated but frowned upon and Informant 40 wants to stress the importance of human relations and respect between people. The 'ways' and human relationships as he has experienced them in the Netherlands are thus preferred for Informant 40, while some of 'the ways' and environment of his native town are now seen as backward, rude and ones which lack civility.

“There, the attitudes of the people towards you make you feel like a human being. I came back in Bulgaria and I had to make enquiries about health insurance for my children; I felt so uneasy because it was the first day since my arrival from England. You can feel suddenly the relationship between England and Bulgaria. Inside [the amenity] they scolded me, they did not explain to me what was going on; [...] On the whole, these are things which push you away in a certain way. Abroad, no matter what work you do, you feel good.” (Informant 35, male, Montana, early 50s)

Again, Informant 35 shares similar observations about the attitudes of institutions in his native town. The relationships he has come across away from Bulgaria make him feel he is treated with dignity and as a 'human being' and predictably, he would incline towards a space where he is treated better. The ways of dealing with people abroad are better appreciated by him, as he has started to cherish the humane aspect of interacting with people.

7.4.5. Seeing the world through a different lens

“You know, life is mixed up! It is because, if you ask me, it is a mistake to go abroad. So, if we didn’t leave [migrate] the first time we would live normally here, you know? You wouldn’t see the differences. [...]

We used to live a good life; I mean to say that you were not dying here [in Montana]. When you go out [of Bulgaria], however, and when you see the other side – then nothing holds you back. Nothing holds you back here.” (Informant 31, female, Montana, early 20s)

This is how Informant 31 from Montana sees her migrant experience as a whole. As she has decided to return to her native place in order to look after her child while he goes to school in Montana, she is no longer able to see her native place in the same way she used to. She finds herself spending most of her time at home, preferring not to socialise with peers or neighbours or to frequent the places she used to before. Her visions and ideas about life appear to have been changed fundamentally and have taken a different direction. As a returning migrant, she now refuses to appreciate what the people around her do and to join them in their daily life practices. She finds herself spending most of her time at home by herself while her life priorities have taken a new form. Simple things in her life, such as her appreciation of food, are now different. Informant 31 is now able to see the differences regarding the quality of meat in Bulgaria which she refuses to consume. This difference of perceived quality has forced her to become vegetarian while in Bulgaria.

“Now in Bulgaria I don’t touch even one gram of meat – I was forced to become a vegetarian as when I came back I bought meat but I could not eat it. I simply felt the difference immediately. The taste was bad. I didn’t like it. I bought minced meat and I threw it away. My mother asked me ‘What are you doing?’ - ‘I can’t, it smells terrible, I will puke!’ - ‘Are you crazy, I will eat it; you are coming from Germany; I am used to it, I have been here!’ [laughing] ... Simply, there is a huge difference.”

It is the argument of this section that life in Bulgaria is no longer appreciated in the same way. Informant 31 finds life as no longer fulfilling her interests, ideals and needs. Her ideas, visions and priorities have shifted and taken a different dimension when she came back.

“Here [in Bulgaria]... you spend a lot of money; even if you earn a lot of money and work a lot there is no way for you can have a normal life here.

[Do] you know what everybody keeps telling me? [Because] I don't care, I stay inside at home – I stay indoors. So now when people meet me outside [on the streets in the mahala] they tell me 'Welcome!' though I have been here since last year. They say to me 'Welcome!'; so what I say is 'Thank you!' because I am ashamed to say I am here and they see me for the first time for a year. The others, however, my closed ones, tell me 'You are a recluse; you are crazy, you are not normal; how can you stay indoors all day long? Not to go anywhere, only to pay bills, you only go to the bazaar and that is all...' I say to them— 'What should I do? Should I go to a disco club or to a party? Or to stay in bars and restaurants all day long? That is not what brings me pleasure!' When I get up in the morning for example, I like to stay at my house. [...] I don't want to go out, do you understand?" (Informant 31, female, Montana, early 20s)

The story of Informant 31 is informative as it illustrates the ways she has been changed and transformed. Her experiences abroad have helped her re-evaluate her visions and purpose of life. As a result, this has affected the ways she has started to feel and behave in her native environment. Seemingly, she has arrived to some other and new life-realizations which she cannot pursue and satisfy in her native environment and from here begin to stem her difference from the rest of the non-migrant community.

Very similar is the narrative of Husband and Wife 3 from Sofia. Due to the crisis and the high unemployment rate in Spain, they had to return to their home in their Romani neighbourhood in Sofia. Things no longer looked the same for this family either. They found themselves very often comparing the two places, Spain and Bulgaria, and this comparison was often hurtful as it reminded them about the harsh reality they would need to put up with while in Bulgaria. Often, as they related, they travel mentally and recall their lives in Spain, socialising with friends and recalling the quality of life and the things they were able to do and enjoy abroad. Their life in Spain is thus preferred, as it is characterised with less worries about the future, greater tranquillity and security, as well as a more enjoyable environment. The contexts of the various places, are thus associated with feelings such as being poor and living miserly in Sofia, compared to enjoying a higher social status, and with more financial security, greater comfort and well-being in Spain.

Now, as the family has come to newer and different life-realizations, they are no longer spending as much time with friends and socialising outside. Their attitudes towards their peers and friends in the mahala in Sofia are now also perceived as

different and their relationships have changed. It appears they are no longer satisfied with the status quo in their native place. As a result, their views and perceptions of life have been drastically challenged.

There is a shared narrative amongst many of those migrants who for some reason need to return and stay in their native places. The fact that they have been able to personally live and experience different realities makes them different and new persons who are now enabled to feel, appreciate and view life in different ways. Their experiences are based not on external sources, narratives or observations but on real first-hand experiences which helped them learn and experience other realities. Due to the fact that they have had the chance to taste and live these new realities and spaces, their return is often seen as a sobering and undesired option.

“[I am dreaming about the Netherlands] very often! I was even just talking [about it with my friend]. I have something like nostalgia. [...] As if everything is given to you on a plate. You have had the chance to enjoy a great time in life.” (Informant 36, male, Montana, 50s).

“[I feel] more special in a sense – more different; considering my life before and after. [Before I went abroad for the first time] it seems I was happier being in Bulgaria. After that, I started feeling a little less happy only because I had a basis of comparison. [...] When for the first time I went into a pharmacy and when I saw there was not a single antibiotic medicine which did not cost more than 2 euro something. I felt very sad for Bulgaria – not for the Roma but for Bulgaria. Later, I saw this in Germany and in the Netherlands as well. [...] It is like you go into a shop and buy cheese for 5 stoitinkas⁴⁴ for example – according to their standard.

[Now,] I may write books; I am richer through my observations, but not stronger or weaker. Yes, I know more, more information; that is why I say richer. [...] I feel more sad as I realised how much we are lagging behind [in Bulgaria] – I knew this in terms of statistics, however, now as I went there I saw it and my word is – [I am] sad...” (Informant 41, female, Montana, 50s)

⁴⁴ One stoitinka is a monetary unit equal to one hundredth of a Bulgarian lev (one lev is about 38 pence).

“Things like this” relates Informant 53 from Stara Zagora with a heavy sigh as our conversation comes to an end, “My life ends here. It was very nice there – 20 years....”

Interviewer – “Isn’t it nice for you here now?–

“A settled life... What can I do?” (Informant 53, male, Stara Zagora, 50-60s)

This “settled life” for Respondent 53 is what he considers as dreadful and mundane. He is no longer able to travel, explore and learn. All this he considers as a blockage and even an end to his life, as he stays in the house he has managed to build in the Stara Zagora mahala over the years. What stays with him, however, even though he might have a settled life, are his life memories, experience and friends from abroad, which have made him a richer and a different person, but also can ‘displace’ him at any time. Also, he feels he has enriched his personality and added new dimensions to his identity.

All these experiences and life observations result in a form of displacement for Roma migrants, even though they might fail to appreciate any tangible differences due to their travels abroad. They also result in the ways they perceive and look at life with a different set of eyes. Now, they have personal observations and life-experiences and they are better able to decide what would be better for them in life, what would work in their interests and thus where they would really like to see themselves in their future. When they come across ‘old’, often times appreciated as negative and ignorant, behaviour of residents in their country of origin, they are less likely to accept it as ‘normal practice’ and thus become less likely to tolerate it. Also, because they struggle to earn money, coupled with facing discrimination based on their ethnic origins, brings them to realise that elsewhere they would be more likely to be successful and, more importantly, happier and able to live more fulfilling lives. Thus, Roma migrants have taken another shape, their identities have been enriched, and their feelings of belonging have been challenged.

7.5. Conclusion

This chapter sought to consider Roma migrants’ personal lived experiences. It argued that there is an emerging ‘culture of migration’ at least in the smaller towns of Montana and Stara Zagora. Even though the scale of this ‘culture of migration’ is

less obvious in the capital city Sofia, there seems to be a considerable number of migrant Roma. What could be observed, nevertheless, among many of the Roma are their changing perceptions due to their experiences as migrants. This, by itself, portrays them as different and differing from all the other Roma migrants and also all those Roma who have been sedentary or non-migrants. Firstly, they differ from other Roma migrants as each and every lived experience is unique and the life realisations they come across are individual and based on their personal encounters. Yet there are some emergent patterns which could be observed among Roma migrants which could be shared among many of them. There were many instances of acculturation which almost all migrants experience, such as getting used to certain behaviour, respect for the law, and hygiene for example. And secondly, even though each migrant experience deserves to be studied alone due to its unique stories and lived experiences, the experiences and observations of the Roma migrants differ from those of the non-migrants, or those who have not have the chance to live abroad. This was hopefully illustrated by the difficulties returning migrants have been facing in re-adapting to their places of origin.

Thus, as a result of their migrations several main conclusions could be drawn and which are linked together. There are processes of acculturation which can be observed by many of the Roma informants. They get used to new paces and places, they get acquainted with the 'ways' of the host country and get used to these, sometimes to the point at which they start to love and long for it. This adaptation acts as a catalyst for change in many of them which manages to challenge their perceived feelings of belonging and 'home'. Further, their life-aspirations and visions change due to the things they come across and learn as migrants. Many have started to appreciate the importance of respect and human dignity and in the instances they are not in a position to be treated in the ways they have gotten used to as migrants, this resulted in their discomfort and unease. In the cases when migrants needed to stay in their home countries, some have found it very hard to get used to their 'old' lives due to the lived experiences they have come across elsewhere. These have been acting as 'real' points of reference and as bold reminders that there is more to life than they used to know. As a result, the ways they perceive the world and the phenomena they experience in it have been challenged. As we saw, some failed to put up with their

lives in Bulgaria and their social relationships have been changed. They often seek to escape by mentally travelling to and yearning for the places they have found pleasant and joyful.

All these processes are vital as they show the new dimensions of the identities of the Roma and their new personalities. They also demonstrate the challenged ways they perceive their home places and the things they would like to access there. All these migrant experiences could be understood in two main ways. On the one hand, it shows that before they actually migrated they have been living in a form of 'ignorance' or disillusion with their perceptions of the world – they could not have known what would it be like to live in another place. With their migrations they start to learn other, often better and more pleasant, realities and lives which result into their personal forms of dissonance. And on the other hand, it shows that their lives as migrants are illusions as well. This is because there is no one lived reality and each space is as real as any other. Probably, it is because of these new realisations that migrants often feel perplexed and start to experience challenged ideas about their lived experiences.

Chapter 8 Discussion and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

There were three broad themes which underlined this research from its outset. Firstly, it was eager to find out the relationship between migration and Roma from Bulgaria; or what could we still observe, what is it that potential migration brings to the Bulgarian Roma migrants; which qualities of Roma would be unaffected by migration and what would change? Secondly, it wanted to learn more about Romani hybrid identities and, thirdly, what is the relationship between displacement and migrants' interpretations of 'Romanipe?' In order to get a better understanding to these questions, we looked into the four empirical chapters which explored the themes of migration, feelings of belonging, identity and 'Romanipe', and the 'eye-opening process.' The conclusions of this thesis overlap and should not be studied in isolation from one another. Following below is what was observed and what could be learnt from this work.

In this chapter we will try to address the key question which we sought to answer from the outset of this research. It will therefore concentrate on the questions of what 'Romanipe' is and what is its relationship with migration. It will start with the theme of the '*internal struggle*' and the sense of 'confusion' which arose in many of the narratives in this work. It will endeavour to understand it better by drawing on Bauman's (2007, p.7) idea of "negative globalization" and the emergence of individualism in today's age. Anzaldua's (1987) idea of the hybrid and Soja's (2007) "third space" also come as useful tools which explain the often conflicting views and interpretations of Roma respondents and their identities.

The chapter will continue by suggesting that regardless of the original and additional features and characteristics Romanies add in their practices, they manage to preserve certain peculiarities and continue to maintain their Romani identities. Thus, it considers the concepts of the "art of living" and "selective multiculturalism" as ones which can be merged and treated as one since they both stress the flexible and

adaptable nature of Roma. This agility should not be studied to suggest the extinction of the Romani identity or assimilation abroad but as a useful way to express the Roma character.

Thrift's (2007) "Non-Representational Theory" (NRT) proved to be useful in the analysis for this research by virtue of its suggestion that there are other and several voices which are to be heard and recognised as genuine and credible. The question of 'representation' and migration is pivotal and very relevant in this work and that is why Thrift's theory was considered as compatible: it is able to explain the interplay between migration and Romani identity.

Finally, this chapter will end with a deliberation about the various ways Romani identities can develop with time. That is why this work will draw on Massey's (1991; 1998) ideas of space as well as Marushiakova and Popov's (2010) processes of "consolidation and segmentation". It ends in advocating for an open-minded and open-ended way in studying the mosaic of Romanies in the wider European space.

8.2. 'Internal struggles' and Romani migrations

One of the points which could be brought out of the findings of this research is the 'internal struggle' which migrants start to experience as a result of their travels. This work noted that a great many interviewees experience different forms of confusion and struggle. It argued throughout this work that Roma are faced with uneasy decisions as they embark on journeys abroad. Their journeys were on the whole influenced by pursuit of their (mostly) basic human needs and lack of available options in Bulgaria. Initially, it is one of the family members who migrates first (it may equally be the woman or the man in a family), while children and other family members originally stay. Thus, one of the first points of internal conflicts which Romani migrants face is the one linked with issues of disintegration of the family unit.

There was another element of 'internal struggle' and this is linked with their attachment to their places of origin. Even though migrants find themselves better off financially and socially abroad and are often united with families and children, they

are often not at peace. This is because of the feelings which they harbour regarding their attachment to their countries and most importantly their native homes. Even though this thirst for 'the home' and the environment there can be quenched at least once a year (in order to do some work around their houses, and also to meet up with other beloved members of family), there are still feelings which make Roma migrants feel uncomfortable and uneasy for abandoning dear relatives and home spaces.

A clear third element of the internal struggle of the informants stems from the original perspectives they gain as a result of their travels. In cases when they return to their native places they re-discover the realities of their old lives and evaluate them through a 'new set of eyes.' Even in the cases when migrants had spent short periods of time abroad, their lives were still fundamentally changed. The first experiences abroad acted for many of the Roma as the 'defining moment' in their lives, which enabled them to clearly distinguish their periods of life 'before' and 'after' migration. Now, due to their recent experiences the ways Romanies perceive and appreciate their lives results in greater realisations about life, often imposing a *struggle* and confusion, as life does not appear the same any more. As several of the informants related, they would hardly perceive their lives in Bulgaria as equally unbearable or bad if they had not gone abroad and gained other perspectives for appreciating and judging their lives.

This theme of the 'internal struggle' came up regularly and was prominent in the analysis of the empirical chapters. This could be linked with Bauman's (2007) argument that today's age is characterised with uncertainty and unpredictability. Bauman (2007) then conveys that it is a "negative globalisation" in which individuals, rather than family units, or other group formations, that are at the centre of analysis in this age. Further, the more flexible these individuals are, the better off they are as they are more likely to be successful and also viewed favourably by others. Employers make sure to hire persons who demonstrate flexibility in terms of their abilities to travel in order to pursue new opportunities at short notice (Lavikka, 2004). The journeys abroad for this study's informants, in return, are led mainly by their pursuit to meet their most immediate needs, such as food, clothing, and housing.

It has also appeared that the sooner Romanies come to terms with the fact that looking to satisfy their economic needs requires being away from their home-places the better it is for them. The term “negative globalization,” (Bauman, 2007, p.24 however, should be understood in this work only in the context that it urges individuals to experience uncertainties and sometimes unfair treatment, as the section ‘Negatives sides and experiences as a result of migration’ demonstrated. The fact that Romani migrants today are able to embark on migratory journeys and do not need to face unnecessary hurdles such as visa requirements can hardly be appreciated as negative. As many of the Romani informants shared eagerly, they were extremely grateful to EU policy-makers for the establishment and existence of such a space within which they can travel and pursue their dreams and quests for better lives.

The decisions of Bulgarian Roma to migrate abroad have appeared to be primarily driven by their search for economic benefits, enforced by the lack of opportunities to earn in Bulgaria. Labour migration, for Marushiakova and Popov (2013), is the type of migration which has been observed among Bulgarian Romanies since the mid-1990s. In periods before 2001, Roma had to try and look for various ways and routes to enter their chosen countries of destination and work there illegally. Thus, the freedoms which have become available to them, especially since 2001 with the Schengen agreement, and 2007, with the Bulgarian accession to the EU, have been heartily welcomed by Bulgarian Roma. This *freedom to travel and work abroad* has proved to be a favoured topic among many interviewees and that is mostly how they commented on how it feels to be ‘a European Union citizen’ (rather than any other policy of ‘integration’).

Through this theme of ‘internal struggle,’ Roma migrants seem to fit very well with another of Bauman’s (2007) views about today’s ‘liquid modernity.’ He speaks of an increased global liquidity and a world which lacks necessary vital checks and balances. In this regard, the empirical findings of this research agree with Bauman (2007): in following some of the respondents’ stories, these revealed unpleasant and negative experiences, exploitation by employers, inhumane treatment and their monotonous hard work abroad. Often, interlocutors saw travelling abroad as a choice of last resort and in cases where they have experienced hard work, harsh treatment,

injustice or boring lives abroad, they were reluctant to recommend migration and they saw it as travelling to loathed places, or 'hell' (to use their word). Nevertheless, they would put up with monotonous and hard work abroad and compromise their health for the sake of making a living or saving some extra money. Roma migrants in such a way have contributed to host societies' economies and businesses. Unregulated labour and exploitation of Romani migrants have made a clear contribution to various businesses and individuals across Europe, especially during the recent economic and financial crisis. Cherkezova and Tomova (2013, p.152) maintained in a report for the UNDP that the employment of Roma abroad has strengthened host countries' flexibilities by "reducing their expenditure on long-term employment contracts and social allowances paid". Furthermore, since a large proportion of Roma women have been mainly involved in working as carers abroad (by taking care of host families' houses and children), their help has enabled very many local women in those host societies to perform their regular jobs and satisfy their needs (Cherkezova and Tomova, 2013). There were examples of narratives of exploitation, unfair treatment, unpaid work and employment without contracts, about which Roma respondents often complained as grossly unfair. Not surprisingly, many saw this research as a platform through which they could complain and raise awareness about their personal hardships and the injustices they have been facing as migrants.

The theme of the 'internal struggle' epitomises a curious paradox. While there were instances of unfair treatment of Roma while they were abroad, similar behaviour and experiences in Bulgaria were given as the 'push factors' which drove many of them away from Bulgaria. Not least was the lack of employment opportunities and the hurdles which many Roma face that urged them to consider emigrating. Many informants spoke about the discrimination and prejudice they have faced by employers while in Bulgaria, but also abroad.

Yet to assume that it is a wholly 'negative globalisation', one characterised with uncertainty, unpredictability and heightened individualism, as Bauman (2007) proposes, would be incomplete. In the personal narratives of the Romani informants, there were many instances which clearly pointed towards the perceived positive

impacts of migration. Often, after tasting new life-styles, migrants appreciated their foreign spaces as a 'heaven,'⁴⁵ as opposed to the 'hell' which they sought to escape from in Bulgaria, one which is highly desired and pleasant. Many of the Romani migrants demonstrated increased social statuses due to the work they do abroad, which in turn has resulted in their subjective feelings of increased well-being and life-satisfaction.

Hence, from this part of the research we can draw the following points: First of all, the findings of this work agree with Bauman's (2007) assertion that people need to be ready and available to be on the move at short notice and that movement and migration has proved to be one of the integral characteristics of the current age. As seen, the sooner the Roma realised that they should seek better opportunities away from Bulgaria, the better it was for them. This links well with the second point regarding the reasons Bulgarian Roma are on the move is because of their search for something better than what they currently have, see and experience.' The Oxford Dictionaries (n.d.) online gives a similar definition of utopia: "[a]n imagined place or state of things in which everything is perfect." Romani migration is thus a search for their "utopias" – which is in turn linked with the result of "failed utopias" they come across (Bauman, 2007, p.100). In other words, being on the move for most Romani migrants proved to be fuelled by the not being able to live in the ways they would really like to (regardless of how trivial this may sound). However, contradicting some beliefs that migration is innate to Roma, or even more, that they are nomads by nature,⁴⁶ more than the half of the respondents shared their genuine feelings of belonging which revolved around their native Bulgarian places. Yet their return to their 'real homes' proved to be impossible, resulted in the paradox innate in their feelings of an 'internal struggle', forms of unease, torment and tension. Such a 'return' is impossible because of the reality of life that migrants find in Bulgaria – high unemployment rates, crime, unhealthy and unwanted social environments and considerably limited life-options for their children. There were shared feelings of

⁴⁵ 'Heaven' and 'hell' were terms frequently used by several interviewees and that is why they are deliberately used in this text in order to emphasise their connotations.

⁴⁶ For a discussion on the perception of how Roma have been perceived as nomads or travellers, see Matras (2004), Marushiakova and Popov (1997; 2011), Teichmann (2002), Kenrick (2004).

shame for some of the Romani respondents as they had to leave their (Bulgarian) 'homes' and embark on a search for their luck or 'utopias' somewhere else. Conversely, for those migrants who identified their 'homes' as their places abroad, many still chose to return to their Bulgarian places of origin, as they felt they had an obligation to meet up with beloved family members and relatives, who for some reasons were not able to join them abroad.

Thus, this work chooses to stress the theme of paradox, struggle, tension and confusion which many of the Romanies experience. On the one hand, many Romanies are better off due to the freedoms to travel and the consequences of their travels abroad, which also provide them with new ways to perceive today's world. On the other hand, they are rarely and thoroughly satisfied as they leave their beloved homes or family members and because of the dissonances they discover linked with their new experiences.

The findings of this work also agree only partially with another of Bauman's (2007) claims that of the 'negative' characteristics of today's globalised world, where we can no longer speak of social or family units at the centre of analysis, as this has shifted to the individual level. From one standpoint, there were numerous examples of families who have to spend years separated from each other, as this has been the only way they could make ends meet. While children were being taken care of by grandparents and in-laws, parents (or only one of them) had to be abroad in order to earn and send money back. On other occasions, respondents spoke about the individualistic and distant ways family and friends behaved while being abroad. In these instances, instead of helping each other, they see each other as potential threats who could replace them in their jobs abroad. We can then see that the expectations about the role of the Romani families (as being supportive and caring, for example) are challenged.

From another standpoint, this work does not agree fully with the assertion that focus has shifted to the individual level. We saw through the findings how Romani migrants chose to act against the odds and against their personal preferences and interests solely in order for them to be united and stay together as a family unit.

Furthermore, there were examples where Romani migrants consciously decided to stay together while abroad and as a community, even though they perceived that such a unity might be contrary to their interests as residents abroad. For example, some spoke about the fact that being together impedes the learning of the host language or socialising with the local population.

It appeared throughout the analysis that there are competing forces or curious paradoxes in the experiences of the interlocutors which have resulted in the ambiguous ways they appreciated their migratory experiences. When studying the narratives of Bulgarian Roma migrants, we sense some of the conflicting ways of their feelings of belonging (torn between their Bulgarian places and abroad), the novel ways they begin to perceive and appreciate their Bulgarian places (as a result of 'eye-opening' experiences), and the roles of their families and relatives (which for some is disintegrating, while at the same time informing belonging).

8.2.1. Bulgarian Roma migration and 'liquidity'

In the Migration chapter, we followed the types, reasons and the consequences of the migrations from Bulgaria Roma. One of the things which characterises their movements are their quests to improve their lives, raise their social status and escape unhealthy environments for the sake of their own 'survival' in this world and in order to provide better futures for their children. In light of Bauman's (2007) argument about the 'liquid times' of today's age, this work problematized typifying or framing the migratory patterns of the Bulgarian Roma because these could be many at the same time. A skilled labourer abroad was shown to turn to an unskilled one in a given country, while the type of work would not prevent them from pursuing their economic needs. A 'seasonal' migration turned out to mean more than just being a paid employee for a particular period abroad but also spending (paid and unpaid) time abroad due to the more favourable weather the foreign place offers. Also, in what we saw as 'rhizomatic' migration, we saw the respondents would take unpredictable migratory routes, as opposed to following any pre-determined particular pattern of movement, where Romani migrants would go so long as they believe they would be able to meet their economic pursuits, interests and dreams. And, finally, there was a sense of liquidity evident from the studied relationship

between the physical re-location of migrants and their mental and imaginative ideas: a (favourable) image, idea about the future, or memory of the past may urge Roma to start on a physical journey to another place; at the same time, even though they may remain physically immobile for one reason or another in a certain place, they continue being migrants due to their recollection of memories and experiences which keeps displacing them. This mental displacement could be also seen as another form of search for a better place, a form of escape from something unpleasant in their current lives as Roma, or simply a comfortable (mental) resort they can rely on when they need it.

8.2.2. Feelings of belonging of Bulgarian Roma migrants

In order to get a better understanding of their identities, we tried to learn more about the feelings of belonging of the Bulgarian Roma migrants. For some of the respondents, there was a clear demarcation between Bulgaria (and their home places) and abroad. These respondents distinguished between “desh” and “bidesh” (Gardner, 1993, pp.1-2) or their birth places, which nourish their spirits and beings, and those places abroad that provide them with vital economic resources. This type of belonging, predictably, was related to migrants’ unpleasant experiences abroad such as exploitation, monotonous, hard work and lack of the dear and desired social lives and contacts. It was not only the social but the surrounding environments, such as nature and climate, which proved to determine their feelings of belonging and perceptions of ‘home.’

While for some of the informants there may be a clear understanding of their spatial belonging, others pointed towards a more transnational, diluted understanding of belonging. They could not determine with clarity where they feel most comfortable and would like to see themselves in the future. Here, there was a sense of ‘simultaneity’ in their belonging, which also implies forms of ‘struggle’ and confusion in determining their feelings of belonging. This is because of the attachment to and the importance of being close to family members and kin, which informs Roma migrants’ feelings of belonging. The foreign countries increasingly become the places which provide not only the desired immediate needs of the Roma migrants but they also become the places for their future: Romani children are born

abroad, receive their education and vocational trainings there, establish networks and increasingly find themselves in spaces which offer greater prospects for their futures (compared to Bulgaria). The tension is born as parents find themselves torn between their own attachments to their home places where they often return to remodel, build or furnish their homes, meet with dear members of their family and commemorate important celebrations, such as weddings, and the 'foreign' places which they become increasingly accustomed to and where their children belong. It could be asserted from the evidence of this work that Bulgarian Roma migrants can face two (or more) countries which are alluring, as they provide the necessary pull factors for their well-being and what they deem as important, and that there is thus a sense of 'simultaneity.'

The key point here is that family proves to inform feelings of belonging. Even though in this 'open society' individuals need to be able to move and relocate to other places in order to pursue their interests or 'utopias', the centre of analysis has not shifted to the individual level, as Bauman (2007) argues; closeness to the Romani community and to children proved to be able to determine where people would decide to migrate to or settle down. While abroad, a predominant part of the Romani respondents chose to stay in close proximity to other members of the Romani community, even though they may complain that their relationships have changed or been severed (due to competition to needed resources). For those respondents who for some reason are not able or willing to live in direct proximity to Romani communities abroad, they still demonstrated knowledge about where Roma and Bulgarian migrants could be found and thus connected with them when there has been such a need. It is argued that the nourishing of the Bulgarian Roma migrant identity comes from their choices to stay together or re-unite when they need to. This also informs their feelings of belonging towards a group with which they identify and chose to stay in proximity with. This was well observed among respondents from Montana and Stara Zagora who followed certain migratory paths. While migrants from Montana were found in greater numbers in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and Ghent, Belgium, those from Stara Zagora chose to pursue their livelihoods in Poland and the Czech Republic. Thus, certain 'nerve centres' could be identified as being created by those Roma who stay together, regardless of the knowledge that such

proximity, as opposed to mingling and living with the locals, might hurt their prospects as migrants. In these created spaces abroad, Romanies perform and live their identities as they encounter and socialise with each other, celebrate (important) social events and establish businesses. Thus, in countries other than Bulgaria, migrants become increasingly comfortable abroad where they live in this desired proximity to each other while adapting to the environments of the hosts and adopting various elements from them. The controversy and tension is evident as respondents mindfully chose to stay close to each other and retain certain parts of their ethnic group capital (such as language, culture and traditions) even though it has been appreciated as something which offers fewer benefits to them as migrants compared to wholeheartedly trying to assimilate with the host society (Esser, 2008). The other source of tension, as we saw, is based on the multiple belonging migrants have due to their attachment to family and kin who happen to reside in more than one place.

8.3. Migration, 'Romanipe' and the Romani identity

The theme of struggle or paradox was also quite prevalent when respondents delved about what is it that they perceive as intrinsically Roma, or their perception of 'Romanipe'. As they searched to define that term, they were torn between already existing and well-established stereotypes about Gypsies or Roma and newer formulations. On the one hand, negative labels characterise the 'Gypsies' as lazy and thieves. A popular representation is one of 'work-shy misers, who cannot help themselves and educate themselves but only procreate and be a burden and a threat to the state.'⁴⁷ With such a backdrop, no wonder the Roma are convenient scapegoats, especially at times of crises, and provoke attacks by the public and populist (right-wing) politicians. On the other hand, rather 'orientalist' and romanticised images of the Roma characterise them (both in popular literature and in academia) as freedom-

⁴⁷ Most of these beliefs and stereotypes are repeated and perpetuated by anecdotes, jokes, and 'stories' which make their way into mass media and the 'common knowledge' of people. While some stereotypes could be space-specific and may take various nuances, there is a number of them which are found world-wide. For example, a study conducted by Bulgarian and Italian collaborators in 2014 found some shared deeply-rooted narrative (Association of European Journalists – Bulgaria, 2015); also, for a detailed analysis of the social distance in Bulgaria and dominating stereotypes, see Pamporov (2009)

loving travellers, with distinct and peculiar characteristics such as their culture and language, which are different or Other from the 'Occident' (Said, 1978). What the findings of this research suggest, however, through the lens of Roma migrants, is that to speak of a 'Romanipe' in clichéd or stereotyped terms such as the ones described above, is unhelpful and distracts from any 'fair' definition. The term 'Romanipe' seems to be an evasive one and even more so when studied in light of the thoughts and observations of the Roma who are involved in their travels. Not only do they discover new aspects of their identities and also build new ones, but they also re-define their own beliefs, perceptions, cultural practices and traditions which act as one whole and re-define the ideas of what it is that makes them Roma. The identity of all of the informants was self-described as 'Roma' and they hardly failed to see themselves as anything else but Roma, even though some of them purposefully and for strategic reasons might choose to hide their ethnic heritage, whether in Bulgaria or abroad. As became clear through the narratives of most of the interlocutors, they would choose to hide their Romani identities due to fear of exclusion and discrimination rather than any sense of doubt as to this identity.

In the empirical findings, exemplified by some informants who have migrated to the Netherlands, we witnessed how they mindfully choose to avoid and not socialise in public with other Roma. People were identified and perceived as Roma by the informants because of their dress code, behaviour, language and also through their 'feelings' which are often left unspoken and hard to put into words, yet conspicuous and unmistakable. As we saw, open contact with these Roma was undesirable and to be avoided, strategically, due to the perceived stereotypes and largely negative labels. This behaviour is indicative of the individualistic desire of the Roma migrants to single themselves out from 'the rest of the Roma' in order to be better able to pursue their economic interests abroad and not be hindered by being associated or identified as members of such a 'deviant' group. These specific cases give a real illustration of the interplay between the three approaches of defining the Roma. Firstly, 'Romanipe' could be something which they are ashamed of: an ethnic group with prevalent and widespread, even among the Romanies themselves, stereotypes and labels which are negative on the whole. Secondly, it could be the things they are proud of: peculiarities such as traditions, language, practices and behaviour. And

thirdly, neutral elements such as shared feelings of belonging towards a larger sibling (Roma) group which is left unspoken though it is felt.

In this case, one could reason that none of these three approaches is particularly true and at the same time necessarily wrong and that is the stance of this research. The lived experiences of the Roma, as witnessed in the empirical findings, show the articulation of a clear interplay between the opposing (positive and negative) sides. Both approaches can be brought to the fore for different purposes and for various reasons. We saw that most of the respondents expressed their frustration regarding the never-ending and limiting labels and stereotypes attached to them which they sought to refute and prove wrong by any means possible. We saw also that Roma can still believe in existing stereotypes and used them in their quest to define what 'Romanipe' may be. Roma informants themselves sometimes saw and recognised the involvement in swindles and in illegal matters as 'our business'. From the narratives of the informants this work gathered that 'Romanipe' can also be interpreted as something honourable – respect and honour of traditions and family obligations. Further, it could be more than that, such as the feeling of belonging towards a specific group of Roma, and a larger sibling group. Therefore, we see interplay between different, sometimes contradictory, narratives in understanding what 'Romanipe' might be. These accounts, furthermore, are further complemented by the processes of migration and the new lived experiences which bring another 'true' element to the identities of Romani migrants and the ways they interpret what 'Romanipe' actually is.

This research therefore argues for the veracity and applicability of a 'third approach' or a 'third way' into looking and studying phenomena and identities. The narratives and lived experiences revealed through this research have demonstrated that not only is there a problem when trying to 'define' the Roma identity, and 'Romanipe', but doing so risks to leave out and miss other equally important traits. A 'dualistic' way of thinking, in which Roma are considered as a set of characteristics informed by master narratives, either negatively or positively, is relevant because (as we learn) it informs the ways Roma would choose to identify and perceive themselves. However, such a binary way of thinking is incomplete and wrong: it is prone to bracket Romani

identities and deprives them of a 'third way' or other ways of interpreting their identities. Therefore, a 'dualistic' way of thinking in understanding Romani identities ought to be avoided and especially with the current and new recurring processes of migration. The new experiences which Romani migrants gain through their travels present new interpretations and ways to define themselves as Roma and other ideas about 'Romanipe.' As a result, it is the argument of this work that there is a missing space, or a void, within the generally existing master narratives of 'Romanipe' on the one hand, and the ways Romanies themselves like to see themselves, on the other hand, which are being filled, bridged and remade by their personal experiences as travellers and migrants.

This 'third space' which evolves through their travels and enables the Romani migrants to get novel ways of interpreting how they see themselves as Roma may also be well linked with the idea of 'liquid modernity', discussed elsewhere. It brings people to be flexible and migrate (in order to pursue their dreams and interests) and once on the move they need to re-adjust, re-evaluate and mend their 'ways' as they get to other places and start new lives. This requires a 'fluid/third way' of perceiving themselves in new places and new circumstances. Their migration therefore requires abandoning of any rigid ways of interpreting their Romani identities and altering their practices to suit the specificities of space and contexts they come across.

Gloria Anzaldua's (1987) concept of the *mestiza* also helps in our understanding better the identity of migrant Roma. Anzaldua (1987) problematizes the existence of borders in her work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Studying the border region between the USA and Mexico, she shows how borders are inadequate and have sociological and psychological effects on the people occupying these regions. Thence, the author presents an open space, such as the ocean, and contrasts it with the existence of the unnatural and limiting states borders, such as those between the USA and Mexico. Separation and state borders could be thus considered as obsolete, unnatural and incompetent, especially to those who live within proximity to them. In her opinion, borders exist for the purpose of separating the good from the bad, those to be feared and avoided and those who should not, and in order to create and separate *us* from *them*. Very similarly, as we saw, are the two predominant

interpretations of who the Roma are – one which carries negative connotations with its stigmatising stereotypes, and the other which is positive along with its romanticised images. That is how Anzaldua (1987) introduces the *mestizo* – the hybrid – which reconciles the existence of such opposing extremities. The case of the Roma in migration is a peculiar one due to the interplay of their threefold identities. First of all, they have shown themselves to have a strong Bulgarian national identity, as rightfully they are citizens of that nation-state. Secondly, they have always considered themselves as Roma and this has certainly informed and influenced their lives and existence. And thirdly, they begin to take on other identities, such as those of the countries they happen to know better as they start to live abroad. In this way, we start to see the interplay of at least several fluid national identities and an ethnic Romani identity (which, regardless of their location in Europe, or in the world, is readily defined through already existing master narratives and descriptions). Anzaldua's analogy of the vast borderless space was favoured for this analysis, as it can be associated with the European Union of today – a space where Roma, as EU citizens, are free to roam about and pursue their dreams or in their search of their 'utopias', as already discussed. As a consequence, they are now free to pick, choose, promote and live various sides of their identities at various and different times in accordance with the specific circumstances and context they may find themselves. All this gives them fluid identities where the relevance of (state and mental) borders might prove applicable, but only formally and in certain situations.

Not only did the interlocutors struggle to arrive at a 'definition' or to give a description of what 'Romanipe' *is*, but they also demonstrated through their lived experiences and performed identities that it *may* be composed of different and disparate elements, which could be found in the already described extreme spectrum, *and* a something else. This something else is linked to the processes of migration and it makes 'Romanipe' always '*becoming*' and in the process of being *created, re-created and re-interpreted*. Other elements are added to it with the acquisition of new identities through travel, acculturation to the host environments and the changes Romani migrants add in their practices, customs and celebrations. All this leads us to reason that such a third approach to understanding 'Romanipe' is well-linked with the concepts of the 'third space', 'lived space' and 'third culture'. Similarly, Soja

(2007) refutes a binary approach in understanding phenomena and identities, namely because they are complex and always incomplete. He thus argues for a 'lived space' which is open and able to grasp and capture the more complex, full and unexplored sides of reality. Evidence from this research reveals that the migratory processes of Roma expand the ways they look at themselves. They discover and add aspects to their identities as Roma, which in turn affects the ways they interpret 'Romanipe.' Moreover, such a discovery of a 'third space' acts as a 'liberating' one due to the encounters of novel ideas and representations: not only do Romanies manage to earn a living and live more satisfactory lives away from Bulgaria but they also learn more about life, gain colourful experiences and discover new aspects of their identities. That lived/third space. For Soja (2007), this is a meeting ground – a hybridity which goes beyond the confines of rigid (mental) boundaries and (state) borders to gives rise to offshoots and differences. This lived space is composed of multiple facets being "contradictory, oppressive and liberating, passionate and routine, knowable and unknowable" (Soja, 2007, p.276).

Informants were able to illustrate various sides of their Romani identities which could sometimes be seen as complementary and contradictory to the lived experiences of other Romanies. For example, we saw that Roma abroad get used to new ways of living, and become accustomed to new behaviours and traditions. Further, their tastes and personal choices take other forms and shapes. To illustrate this with an example, we are starting to see curious combinations of the ways some Roma start to celebrate holidays abroad, such as St George's day (which is valued highly and regarded by the Bulgarian Roma as a 'Romani holiday'). Some of the informants are not able to honour the holiday and celebrate it while abroad due to the commitments they have with their jobs. Those who could celebrate St George's Day abroad, however, demonstrated curious novelties: celebrations abroad are now in tune with the norms and laws of the hosts – the number of people who gather together is smaller, usually indoors, while behaviour is more restrained and mindful of the other residents. This can be seen by some as an adaptation to the ways they are celebrated in Bulgaria. A curious example of adaptation of the ways they celebrate the holiday was narrated by a respondent from Montana who resides in Rotterdam; he gave an account of how he has been leading the traditional Bulgarian dance horo

in the streets of Rotterdam while holding the Dutch flag, rather than the Bulgarian (or Roma) one. Thus, 'Romanipe' is still performed, though in other and new ways.

That is where Thrift's (2007) Non-Representational Theory comes in. The theory has many other implications, however, this work focuses on its emphasis to the *local* and 'unconventional' narratives in understanding of identities and the world we live in. Thrift's (2007, p.297) theory is helpful as it argues that we would hardly be able to fully grasp the world we occupy, as we are situated in it and thus constantly involved in its construction while influencing it for various ends or more precisely "beginnings". Furthermore, this theory is embraced as it seeks to provide more authentic and close understandings of what happens, rather than trying to describe or define it (this point will be further discussed later on).

Thus, this work gives an alternative understanding of the existing dominant narratives about who the Roma are by studying the voices of Bulgarian Roma in migration and recognising the novelties within their identities, experiences, and interpretations of who they are as a result of their migrations. Further, it embraces the 'contradictions' in the self-perceptions and identities of Roma and counts them as credible and genuine. It can be concluded that it would be adequate and accurate to leave the term 'Romanipe' undefined and open. This we learnt from the new meanings Romani migrants acquire due to their travels. 'Romanipe' therefore is constantly becoming, being made, defined, re-defined, and re-discovered, and this is because of the various and constantly emerging subjective interpretations Romani migrants were shown to create within their new lives, acculturations, experiences and world-views. Indeed, one (Romanian) Roma opined that if we try to translate or define 'Romanipe', "we will lose the whole point"; the findings of this research confirm that opinion.

8.4. Feeling and being a Roma. The 'art of being selective'

"The worst thing one can do with words is to surrender to them" (Orwell, 1953, cited in Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). This quote is used in favour of the argument that it is important that meanings inform our choice of words, rather than the other way round. It also seeks to stress that words cannot encompass fully the whole meaning they

would wish to convey. This is related to the study of Roma, the concept of 'Romanipe' under study and especially when Roma involve themselves in travel and processes of migration. What is put forward, instead, is an open-ended way of studying Roma migrants and their identities. That is why the arguably interchangeable concepts introduced in earlier chapters, "selective multiculturalism" (Gropper and Miller, 2001, p.107) and "art of living" (Liegeois, 2007, p.95) are suitable ways to take on, study and better understand the complex identities of Bulgarian Roma in migration. These two concepts are informative and useful as they both propose the same understanding of Romani identities, which they see as flexible and evolving, and nevertheless specific to the Roma as they manage to preserve certain 'characteristics' of their own.

The empirical chapters noted how Roma migrants recognised that being flexible and able to adapt in foreign environments is necessary and indeed vital. There were many examples which demonstrated their abilities to fit into the host societies. Historically, it has been shown that Romanies have learnt how to survive as a group and this is part of their identity. They have proved to be selective regarding the things they incorporate into their lives and that depends on the era, the time and space they occupy. As one of the respondents conveyed, there are no rigid feelings of pride in the Romani identity. Instead, they believe in taking an active approach to life by relying not on state policies and politics but solely on themselves. Thus, they borrow and appropriate new features from the host environments, and this is most of the time an asset that adds another element to their Romani identities. Instead of considering themselves assimilated, many informants indicated their own takes on doing and being. We saw how one of the respondents spoke with pride about his abilities to cook Spanish paella, while another informant spoke about his 'artistic' take on life, about his voracious eye which is able to appreciate and copy from the 'good things' that he has come across and takes from the different foreign environments and uses them in a way specific to his own art. His emphasis has been on his Romani worldview, first and foremost. Thus, this work argues that the strength of the Romani identity comes from the ways Roma borrow and internalise elements from the societies they encounter.

Even though this research lacks a longitudinal aspect, it discerned the birth of new features, changes and processes among the Romani migrants. Thus, through their migrations and due to their new lived experiences from abroad the bricolage of the Romanies gains new patterns and dimensions; Romani people are diverse and colourful groups who, as it has hopefully become clear, differ not only between different countries but also within a certain nation-state. The findings of this research show that there is no one 'intrinsic Roma way' but rather various ways of being actively involved in an (any/foreign) environment, yet without letting it fully assimilate the Roma. The insistence of cultural continuation, values and traditions, even among the cases when there were mixed marriages, suggest the persistence of the continuation of certain Romani values and traditions. Yet, this is not to suggest that the approach of Bulgarian Roma abroad is segregationist. They have demonstrated an ease to join and commemorate holidays, celebrations and also some traditions and cultural practices of the host societies. The fact that they strategically and mindfully decide when, how or if to reveal their Roma ethnic heritage also strongly suggests about their own perceived Romani identities and the central role it occupies in their lives.

8.5. Battle of 'representations' and Roma migrants

There is a problem in trying to perceive the Romani identity; there are many ways to be a Roma and any one of them should be accepted as genuine and authentic. In this research we saw some of the changes which start to take place in the lives of migrant Roma. Due to the findings of this work that there is an observed progression in the identities and perceptions of migrant Roma, Thrift's (2007) "Non-Representational Theory" is seen as useful. Another of the takes of the NRT this work sides with, is its argument that it is impossible for the world to be portrayed and even less so with any certainty. Thrift (2007) is critical also of the logocentric ways of thinking or these which pre-determine the ways of our thinking and perceptions of the world around us. What Thrift (2007) proposes in return, is an open-minded approach to life, observed phenomena and identities which should be all counted as credible. Furthermore, with his criticism of grand theories, he seeks to give emphasis to the local. The problem with grand theories, he asserts, is that they "downgrade the local" and they cannot understand their specificities and particularities (Thrift, 2007,

p.298). He conveys that 'grand theories' re-produce and perpetuate Euro-American cultural myths.

And where does this battle of 'representation' lead us to – one can reasonably ask? There appear to be two main levels of analysis or ways to study the Roma. As it must have become obvious thus far, one level is from academia (and the media), one in which scholars discuss and debate the credibility of earlier and present knowledge and representation of the Roma (Clark, 2004; Hancock, 2004; 2010, cited in Marushiakova and Popov, 2012; Kenrick, 2004; Lee, 2004; Mayall, 1988; 2004). The second level of analysis is on the level of the Romani people themselves. As it has appeared, the ways they define and perceive themselves as Roma has been influenced by the existence of master narratives and representations stemming from the first level of analysis – in the ways general narratives, media, academics and other 'experts' portray the Roma. This work concentrated more on the second level of analysis – the narratives and experiences of Romanies themselves. Similar to the tension which exists in the first level of analysis, where scholars might debate about what is credible knowledge about the Roma, on the lower level, Romanies have a similar debate between themselves about who is a 'better,' 'worse' or 'real' Roma. Usually, this is based on divisions which exist between Romani sub-groups and their respective practices and traditions. As Romanies also recognise, they can differ across countries but also within the borders of a single nation-state (such as Bulgaria). Processes of migration add yet another source of contention in this second level of analysis, as they bring with them other migrant experiences, discoveries of their identities and equally valid interpretations of what it means to be Roma.

With the lived and personal experiences of the informants of this study, this research leans on Thrift's (2007) "Non-Representational Theory" and argues about the importance and credibility of the voices and lived experiences of Romani migrants, in addition to the 'master' narratives or grand theories which advocate for knowledge of what a Roma or a Gypsy could or should be. Rather, it is in favour of the multiple ways to study and consider the Roma, especially due to the ever-increasing processes of migration. The NRT thus seeks to introduce points of "wonder into a social science which, too often, assumes that it must explain

everything” (Thrift, 2008, p.12). In this work we saw the evolution of the identities of Bulgarian Roma as they make new discoveries and encounter other experiences abroad. As a result, one could see the departure from the personal, lived experiences between Bulgarian migrant Roma and those Roma who are ‘non-migrant’. These differences should be considered as essential and it is argued that there is no one way to be a (‘representative’) Roma. As Thrift (2007, p.300) puts it, modernity is a story told by “intellectuals” and the world is dominated by beliefs in myths, magic and all kinds of contradictory elements. Such ‘contradictions’ in the self-perceptions and identities of Roma should be understood as normal and credible, especially when viewed under the lens of migration. The theory posits that the human body is not separate, or unaffected, from the world but a “constantly evolving distribution of different hybrids with different reaches.” Thrift, 2008, p.10). If Bulgarian Romanies are seen as a hybrid group already, with an internalised Bulgarian language, traditions and used to the ‘ways’ inherent in Bulgarian space, these hybrids continues to evolve, especially as Romani migrants encounter other societies, cultures and experiences with their migrations.

This was well illustrated by the narrative of an informant from Sofia (who lives and works in Austria) who is of the opinion that there is no **one** way to understand or behave as Roma. She related that being a ‘real Roma’ requires a constant readjustment of her behaviour which needs to suit the context of her encounters. For instance, when she is surrounded by the sub-group she belongs to, the Kaldarash Roma, she makes sure to adjust her behaviour and follow the rules and traditions of that particular group. Where she is in the company of the sub-group of her husband, an Erlia Rom, she immediately becomes one of the Erlia, while in Austria, she sees no problem or contradiction in striving to follow Austrian rules or ‘ways’ of behaviour. Nevertheless, she does not cease to see herself as Roma and there were no tensions or contradictions in her views regarding such a switch of identities. Whilst, representationally, this mutability might speak of a contradictory sense of identity, from a more-than-representational (Lorimer, 2005) perspective, it reinforces the importance of context for relational identity (re)production.

Lee (2004) encourages the expression and recognition of non-conventional sources of knowledge because their messages are equally important and credible. By giving a platform to the opinions of Bulgarian Roma in migration this research contributes to this need. The informants of this study credited their Romani identities but due to the new identities they acquire through their new experiences and encounters abroad, they do not stay the same nor could it be correct to consider them as 'the same.' Chapter 7, 'Eye-opening processes', tried to demonstrate the new and strong effects of and results from migration. Not only can a transfer and emergence of new ideas and Romani hybridity be seen, but also altered perceptions and feelings of belonging, which affect the ways they appreciate their lives. All these new experiences are therefore credible and genuine, for these migrants in particular. At the same time, they cannot be 'representative' of all Bulgarian Roma migrants and even less so of those Roma from Bulgaria who have not had the chance to gain new identities and experiences as migrants. Therefore, it is argued that the progression of Romani identities and the continual emergence of new ones are to be embraced as equally credible and true. Further, it is contended that there is no one way to study the Roma and Roma migrants, not least to encourage an open-minded approach which is likely to change with time and space.

8.6. Future directions and ways of belonging in the EU

Besides the question of the battle of 'representations', there is another essential question which relates closely to the theme of this research: how do Roma identities, which can be so elusive, relate with the recurrent practices of Romani migration? The answer is limited to this studied case with Bulgarian Roma migrants and favours the argument that the Roma are a real people, not an imagined community, and they are defined by the ways they identify themselves, the people they choose to socialise with and the things they do.

As became clear from the empirical findings of this work, the decisions and actions of Romani migrants were majorly determined by their families, neighbours and friends. Interlocutors often shared that the country of destination is not the most important feature but the people they know abroad. Thus, respondents have been travelling primarily to countries where they have close ties, while knowledge of the

host language, the host society, or other information such as employment opportunities proved to be evaluated as less important factors (Ho and Matfield, 2011). The fact that the majority of the Romani informants have decided to stay together and live in proximity with each other abroad is indicative of the importance they pay to staying within the community, even though they often noted their mutual competition and dissatisfaction with each other abroad.

What we can observe are the formations of Romani communities abroad. This was evident with the Romani informants from Stara Zagora and Montana. Conversely, in the cases when Romani informants chose not to follow any pre-determined migratory paths, but chose countries of destination depending on the economic and employment prospects available to them as individuals, they still demonstrated inclinations to socialise with Roma abroad. This was evident from the observations that they were able to demonstrate knowledge about where other Roma could be reached and by the creation of friendships. Therefore, this research could complement the processes which Marushiakova and Popov (2010) observed among Romani communities since their arrival in the European continent and which they described as specific to the Roma. They described these processes as “consolidation and segmentation” (ibid: 41). “Segmentation” is a process in which one Romani group breaks down into separate sub-groups and divides on the basis of family belonging, clan, or territory. Conversely, “consolidation” is a process in which several different Romani groups come together to form another (newer) group. Looking historically, the authors were able to observe these processes among Romanies across Europe. For instance, the authors demonstrated how, in a generation’s time, two new Romani groups were able to emerge with the restructuring of state borders (Marushiakova and Popov, 2010, p.42).

The majority of the interlocutors expressed a strong attachment to Bulgaria (as a place of belonging) and it seems that nation-states play a central role in the ways they would perceive and distinguish themselves from other Roma – often referring to other Roma by their country of origin. For instance, they would speak of ‘the Romanian Roma,’ ‘the Serbian Roma’ and ‘the Spanish’ in a sense in which the nation-state is vital in the ways they would identify them. For Marushiakova and

Popov (2010) this is because of a legacy of the Socialist Era which aimed to determine the communities and identities of Roma in Central, Eastern, and South-eastern Europe. While special state measures were used to ensure the inclusion, integration or assimilation of the Roma in Eastern Europe during that period, in the West and other parts of the world, in contrast, Roma were 'free' from such policies and as a result have less pronounced attachment towards their respective nation-states (Marushiakova and Popov, 2010).

The recently presented 'freedoms' for Roma in European Union Member States today therefore offer two main options. On the one hand, there is the possibility of the revival of a pan-European Roma identity and Romani transnationalism. This phenomenon is quite possible due to two main factors. Firstly, the interlocutors of this study demonstrated the availability of established networks, family members and friends in more than one foreign country. Today, they have increasing options and chances to travel, live, and re-unite with members of family and Romani friends in several European countries and this was supported by the findings of this research. Secondly, while 'abroad' interlocutors showed interest and increased first-hand knowledge about Roma from abroad, e.g., from Romania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. There were instances when Bulgarian Roma from Stara Zagora befriended and started going out with Roma from Spain, while there are also examples of new friendships which were born abroad between different groups of Roma from Bulgaria (who would hardly intermingle to such an extent while in Bulgaria). These phenomena are undoubtedly mould-breaking and are being currently observed within the EU. Now, many of the informants of this study are able to comment about the ways they feel about 'other' Roma, about their language dialects or the ways they behave. Romani transnationalism would have an increased potential in this first scenario as Roma find themselves abroad, living and working together and finding connections – language (regardless of their dialects), shared experiences, past history, feelings of exclusion, combatting anti-Roma rhetoric and having a desire for empowerment. All these bring potential prospects, especially among young Roma who involve themselves in sorts of activism and grass-root organising.

On the other hand, the prospects of a unified Romani identity and Romani transnationalism will face some serious challenges. This is due to the specific time that sees an economic crisis, financial instability and the rise and emergence of right-wing politics. The examples across Europe are many and can be witnessed in Member States such as Britain, Greece, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria. In this regard, if we are to see a fragmented and disunited European Union, which has decided to stress the importance of a clearly defined nation-state headed by the superiority and favouritism of a certain nation (or ethnic group) over others, the prospects and the potential of a Romani transnationalism will quite likely be curbed and seriously challenged. In this scenario, Romanies will likely pay allegiance towards certain nation-states and this would certainly inform their prime feelings of belonging.

Thus far, based on the stories of the informants of this study, we see a mixed range of views about how they relate with 'other Roma.' Firstly, they identify them as citizens of the particular countries they come from. For instance, informants referred to '*the Romanian Roma*,' or '*the Serbians*' in general terms. At the same time, they referred to the specific sub-group that Roma belong to, even though they may all share Bulgaria as their place of birth. For instance, they often referred to '*the Turkish Roma*' (to describe their religious affiliation) or '*the Kalderash*' while also noting the specific regions in Bulgaria these Roma are from. Secondly, informants identified them all as Roma, '*just like us*', giving accounts of the similar ways they spoke the language, how they behave and do things, and the ways they could recognise each other from a distance - in an unspoken *feeling* of belonging to the same sibling group.

This discussion is important because the wider European space offers new opportunities for the Romanies – not only in terms of providing for themselves, their kin and living better lives but also in terms of forming new (Romani) alliances and friendships. It would be wrong and short-sighted to ignore the potential of the birth of completely new groups of Roma in Europe and that is well in concert with the processes of 'consolidation' and/or 'segmentation' which Marushiakova and Popov (2010) have described.

To expect a gradual new configuration of the Romani people is a quite realistic forecast, especially in the greatly globalised world we live in today. Nowadays, ideas are quickly and easily disseminated and the world is witnessing new conversations between Roma activists from Europe and South America, who have started to discuss and explore the potential and ways to create a global network of Roma which would cut across boundaries. These Roma activists like to see the Roma as 'one nation' and an international group of people without having any territorial claims (Bernal, 2015). This has proved easy especially with the advancement of technological devices and the internet which contributes towards a greater potential of this (political) creation of a more pronounced and better-defined Romani identity. In light of this, there has been a great fresh debate around the setting up of the European Roma Institute regarding the future direction of development of Romani identities in Europe. Backed by the Council of Europe and Open Society Foundations, one of its main visions is to curb predominant negative stereotypes about Roma and act as a source of self-esteem and as a confidence-building mechanism for the Roma people.

Thus, while some see a competition between the different Romani groups – each looking to stress their differences or superiority over the other, others can notice alliances among the various Roma groups and the emergence of a more transnational Romani entity. There are multiple possible ways that relations can unfold over time in a certain space. In the same vein, the wider EU space can be seen as 'open,' as it gives birth to new identities and numerous possibilities of new relations between people. Massey (1991) considers space as open, dynamic and always in the process of becoming. For her, spaces and places carry change and the constant potential of many possible ways of development. Without space there would be no multiplicity and without multiplicity there would be no space (Massey 1998). This work, therefore, leans on Massey's (1998) argument that space is always in the process of becoming and in the process of being made. Space and the identities of Roma within that space are always going to be unfinished, always in the process of becoming, or as Massey (1998, p.37) put it, "there are always loose ends in space". The possibilities and potentials which open up today for the Bulgarian Romani migrants are great and this was hopefully well-observed through the empirical chapters. Due

to their travels abroad, new identities are constantly born which give birth to new relations and differences.

The closing stage of this PhD is open-ended. It is in concert with the ways many Romani migrants begin to feel because of their travels – unsettled and disturbed, which lead to forms of awakening and transformation.

Let us end with a quote which summarises the points we were trying to make:

“One day the river meets the sea. And it is not a river anymore. It’s passed through the wheels of change...in an out of experience – stories, adventure, grand dance... Inevitably, the ride stops. Lost, but not entirely gone... For now, as far as we can tell, the cycle of life? – well, it never ends” (Excerpt from the movie ‘Life Cycles’).

I would like to use the sea as an analogy of the current age we are living today – an age of globalisation, with the lesser significance of national borders and increased movement of people. The rivers represent the cultures and identities which migrants carry, encounter and drop while journeying in their pursuit of their aspirations. Thus, the composition of their cultures, practices and traditions as Roma change with their recurring passages and encounters which could be in numerous fashions such as stories, adventures and dance. Regardless of these inevitable changes, this should not mean a total obliteration of their Romani consciousness which informs their identities: much in the way that the rivers merge with the ocean, but later return in the form of rain.

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Appendix 1: Consent Form

Формуляр за съгласие

Име на проекта: Взирайки се в самия аз: въздействието на ромските миграции върху разбиранията за „Романипе“ от гледна точка на ромите

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Университ Суонзи

Сингълтън Парк

Уелс

Казвам се Александър Маринов и съм студент в Центъра за изследване на миграционните политики в Университета Суонзи, Уелс, Великобритания. Работя над дипломната си работа относно ромските миграции. Обръщам се с молба към вас:

1. Да вземете участие в един свободен и неангажиращ разговор с мен.
2. Да ми позволите да водя записки по време и след нашия разговор, които представляват мислите и възгледите ми базирани на нашата беседата.

Тази дипломна работа е озаглавена „Взирайки се в самия аз: въздействието на ромските миграции върху разбиранията за „Романипе“ от гледна точка на ромите“ и има за цел да открие връзката между ромските миграции и въпросите свързани с идентичността, културата и ромските традиции.

Основната полза, която ще извлечете от това проучване включва възможността да споделите и придадете по-голяма гласност на опита ви, наблюденията ви и собствените ви гледни точки относно ромската миграция. Също така, ще допринесете към изследователската работа, която се стреми да получи по-добро и адекватно разбиране над въпросите свързани с ромските миграции в днешно време.

Бих желал да разговарям с вас в неформална обстановка за вашия опит и мисли върху някой от тези въпроси в удобно за вас време. Продължителността на нашия разговор може да варира и зависи изцяло от това дали темите са ви интересни. Предполагам, че ще са ни нужни минимум около 60 минути, но в крайна сметка всичко зависи изцяло от вас и вашите лични предпочитания. Целта на тази разработка е да бъде дългосрочна качествена работа.

Моля за вашето разбиране, че за да анализирам отговорите ви, нашите беседи могат бъдат (видео и) аудио записани, освен ако вие нямате възражения. Това се прави само и единствено с цел да ми помогнат да запомня и анализирам нашия разговор и в момента, в който съм готов с писменото резюмиране на интервюто, данните ще бъдат изтрети. Разговора ни ще бъде анонимен и аз няма да споменавам за него на никого, така че вие няма да може да бъдете разпознати от други лица. Записите както и моите записки няма да бъдат използвани за други цели, освен за тези свързани с този проект и аз ще бъда единствения човек, който ще има достъп до тази информация. Данните ще бъдат използвани само и единствено за моята изследователска работа и за никакви други цели освен ако не получа вашето изрично съгласие.

Няма правилни или грешни отговори. От интерес за мен са вашият опит и мнение. Можете да повдигате която и да е тема на разговор, ако смятате че тя е важна. Благодаря ви от сърце, че ми обръщате внимание и отделяте от времето си.

Съгласен съм да участвам в това интервю и разбирам, че мога да се откажа по всяко време.

Име:

Подпис:

Дата:

В случай, че имате въпроси, моля не се колебайте да ми пишете на e-mail: 594960@swan.ac.uk , Skype: sando.marinov, или да ми позвъните на телефон: +44(0)742 764 9982, където можете също да ми оставите съобщение и убедателно ще ви потърся.

Appendix 2: Debrief Form

Благодаря ви много, че се съгласихте да вземете участие в това проучване. Вашата гледна точка, наблюдения и опит са изключително ценни и аз се надавам, че участието ви в това проучване е било приятно преживяване и за вас.

Ако желаете да се сдобие с копие от интервюто или последната версия на тази работа, когато са готови, моля уведомете ме и оставете телефон или e-mail адрес за обратна връзка с вас.

Ако също така бихте желали да поддържате контакт с мен, за да мога да следя от разстояние развитието на вашите миграционни преживявания и наблюдения, моля оставете телефон или e-mail адрес за обратна връзка.

В случай, че имате въпроси или коментари относно интервюто или проучването като цяло, чувствайте се свободно да се свържете с мен по всяко време!

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Appendix 3: Sample Mind Map

